



Doing Business in Benin: 2014 Country Commercial Guide for U.S. Companies

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- [Chapter 1: Doing Business In Benin](#)
- [Chapter 2: Political and Economic Environment](#)
- [Chapter 3: Selling U.S. Products and Services](#)
- [Chapter 4: Leading Sectors for U.S. Export and Investment](#)
- [Chapter 5: Trade Regulations, Customs and Standards](#)
- [Chapter 6: Investment Climate](#)
- [Chapter 7: Trade and Project Financing](#)
- [Chapter 8: Business Travel](#)
- [Chapter 9: Contacts, Market Research and Trade Events](#)
- [Chapter 10: Guide to Our Services](#)

[Return to table of contents](#)

Chapter 1: Doing Business In Benin

- [Market Overview](#)
- [Market Challenges](#)
- [Market Opportunities](#)
- [Market Entry Strategy](#)
- [Market Fact Sheet link](#)

Market Overview

[Return to top](#)

- Benin has a stable democracy with a small domestic market. The country is poorly endowed with natural resources and depends on international donor assistance. Cotton production and processing alone account for about one third of Benin's GDP. Its economy is heavily dependent on regional trade and closely tied to that of its neighbor, Nigeria.
- In 2013 Benin imported about \$2.75 billion worth of goods including rice, meat and poultry, alcoholic beverages, fuel oil, plastic materials, specialized mining and excavating machinery, telecommunications equipment, passenger cars, trucks and buses, dredging boats, household goods, pharmaceuticals, and toiletries and cosmetics. Benin's total export was \$495 million in 2013. Export products are mainly cashew, ginned cotton, cotton cake and cotton seeds, shea butter, cooking oil, lumber. Benin's major trade partners include Nigeria, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, U.K., Brazil, U.S., China, , India, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Japan, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Burkina Faso, Chad, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo.
- Currently, trade between Benin and the U.S. is small, but interest in American products is growing. The 2013 trade balance is in favor of the U.S. and amounts to \$602.8 million.
- Benin with its modern port can be used as a platform to reach over 100 million consumers in neighboring landlocked countries such as Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad, and 155 million in Nigeria alone.

Benin has been eligible for the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) since the program began in 2000. It qualified for AGOA textile and apparel benefits in January 2004.

Market Challenges

[Return to top](#)

- Benin's official language is French and English is not widely spoken. U.S. companies seeking to do business in Benin may seek interpreter services.
- Corruption remains a problem in the customs service, government procurement, and the judicial system. The process of resolving civil disputes can be slow due to Benin's inefficient bureaucracy.
- Benin lacks reliable access to electricity, a steady power supply, and quality internet connectivity to households and businesses remains a challenge.
- U.S. businesses exporting to Benin often have difficulty in finding partners who can consolidate smaller orders in ocean-bound freight containers at a competitive price and frequency.
- Businesses should be particularly cautious about unknown Beninese "companies" promising them big business deals. A number of perpetrators of sophisticated internet scams (especially demands for fraudulent advance fees) originating in other countries use Benin as a base to defraud U.S. companies and citizens with "419" scams, so named for section 419 of a Nigerian law aimed at combating financial crime. Potential U.S. investors and exporters can request the Economic/Commercial/Section at U.S. Embassy Cotonou to verify proposed business partners before any commitment.

Market Opportunities

[Return to top](#)

- Despite its small market size, Benin, with its modern and well-located port, is a re-exporting country for its landlocked neighbors and for Nigeria, reaching a market of about 166.2 million consumers.
- U.S. companies have notable opportunities for electronic products, cosmetics and toiletries, telecommunications equipment, electrical power systems, transportation equipment, cotton industry equipment, cereals, meat and poultry, agricultural machinery, dredging machinery, and construction equipment.
- The best prospects for major projects are infrastructure projects, including road, airport, seaport and railway construction), housing, railway, telecommunications, and energy.

Market Entry Strategy

[Return to top](#)

- Most U.S.-based exporters will require the services of a local agent who knows Benin well and can advise an exporter or investor on entry into the Beninese market.
- Investors or exporters can also access Foreign Commercial Service products including the Gold Key to meet potential business partners and the International Company Profile program to gain more information about the Beninese market and possible clients in Benin.
- For investors who wish to establish a business in Benin, the government has established a stand-alone one-stop-shop to facilitate swift registration of new businesses within two days. Owing to Benin's French investment and commercial law, investors may in advance request services of notaries for most documentation when starting a business in Benin. The Economic and Commercial Section can assist with finding potential local partners.

[Return to table of contents](#)

[Return to table of contents](#)

Chapter 2: Political and Economic Environment

For background information on the political and economic environment of the country, please click on the link below to the U.S. Department of State Background Notes.

(The following is the new link to the Background Notes)

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/index.htm>

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/6761.htm>

[Return to table of contents](#)

[Return to table of contents](#)

Chapter 3: Selling U.S. Products and Services

- [Using an Agent or Distributor](#)
- [Establishing an Office](#)
- [Franchising](#)
- [Direct Marketing](#)
- [Joint Ventures/Licensing](#)
- [Selling to the Government](#)
- [Distribution and Sales Channels](#)
- [Selling Factors/Techniques](#)
- [Electronic Commerce](#)
- [Trade Promotion and Advertising](#)
- [Pricing](#)
- [Sales Service/Customer Support](#)
- [Protecting Your Intellectual Property](#)
- [Due Diligence](#)
- [Local Professional Services](#)
- [Web Resources](#)

Using an Agent or Distributor

[Return to top](#)

- U.S. companies considering entering the Beninese market should consider working with a reputable agent or distributor fluent in both French and English, familiar with local business practices, import /export regulations, and experienced in the same or target sector.
- The U.S. Embassy's Economic and Commercial Section can help U.S. companies identify suitable partners by conducting due diligence research upon request. Additional information can be found at <http://cotonou.usembassy.gov>.

Establishing an Office

[Return to top](#)

- An established reputable real estate company or the U.S. company's local partner or agents are the most suitable organizations to identify an office location to lease. An American firm wishing to establish an office in Benin should work with an established local partner of solid reputation and retain a competent Beninese attorney or notary. A list of attorneys licensed in Benin may be found at <http://cotonou.usembassy.gov/lawyers3.html>.

Documents for business startup submitted to Benin's "one-stop window" for business creation, operational since 2012, include a certified copy of applicant's identity card and a criminal record check. Additional information can be found at <http://benin.eregulations.org/media/liasse-info-creation-societe.pdf> or by calling +229-21-310704 or Mr. Israel Adeossi at +229-95-064112. Foreign investors opening a bank account must also obtain a resident permit from Benin's Immigration Service.

- If the company to be incorporated is a branch of a foreign company, the above-mentioned documents will need to include the names of the local board of directors. Once the statutes have been signed, the following steps should be taken: registration of the company by going to the court registrar; publication of the company formation notice in the governmental daily newspaper "La Nation"; filing a statement of existence at the internal revenue service; registration with the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Analysis and registration with the Benin Chamber of Commerce and Industry. These steps may help an applicant receive his or her business license or importer card.
- The incorporation fees to start up a business are currently approximately \$420 (CFA 202,000) for a Beninese national and \$790 (CFA 379,000) for a foreigner for a category B Company (medium size company). For a category A company, a Beninese and a foreigner pay \$150 (CFA72,000) and 394 (CFA 189,000) respectively. A category A (small size company) company includes only one owner and the category B comprises at least two owners with limited liability.

Franchising

[Return to top](#)

- At present, franchising is underdeveloped in Benin. Current franchises are held in the car rental, hotel, and fast food industries.

Direct Marketing

[Return to top](#)

- Direct marketing techniques in Benin may be undertaken through existing telecommunications, postal, and information technology infrastructure. Advertising, telecommunications and communications companies and commercial and public media may also be suitable for direct marketing.

Joint Ventures/Licensing

[Return to top](#)

- U.S. and Beninese companies may form joint ventures to participate in the privatization of a state owned company or in public procurements. With the assistance of a notary, a joint venture of this kind should be registered with the

court registrar and published in the official gazette, the public daily newspapers “La Nation”. Due diligence on the potential partner is always advised.

Selling to the Government

[Return to top](#)

- Government procurements are made in accordance with the Beninese procurement code. Tenders from the central government are announced in major newspapers, particularly in the public newspaper "La Nation", and posted on the website of the Ministry of Finance and Economy at www.finances.bj. Published tenders usually include indigenous investor participation requirements. Current opportunities are best for energy, bridge and road construction, sanitation, building construction, vehicles, and security, agriculture, medical, and other office and professional equipment.
- Bidders are required to submit proposals in French. The U.S. Embassy sends notifications of trade leads to U.S. companies and advocates with appropriate government officials on their behalf, if requested through the U.S. Department of Commerce.
- The U.S. Embassy can assist with verification of the legitimacy of tenders from the Government of Benin. There have been instances of fraudulent claims to issue non-existent tenders.

Distribution and Sales Channels

[Return to top](#)

- Benin's population is concentrated in the southern part of the country, particularly in greater Cotonou and surrounding areas. Retailers and their consumers typically cluster in established public markets. The wholesale sector is dominated by Lebanese, Indian, Pakistani, Chinese, and Beninese businesses. The Dantokpa market in Cotonou is one of the largest open air markets in West Africa. Re-export through Benin to Nigeria is a significant component of local commerce.
- The Port of Cotonou is a major gateway to Nigeria and to landlocked countries such as Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, and Chad. Cargo arriving in the port is transported by road on trucks to various local and neighboring destinations as well northern Nigeria.

Selling Factors/Techniques

[Return to top](#)

Direct personal engagement with current and prospective clients is critical to sales. Promotional materials and technical documents should be available in French or in both French and English.

Electronic Commerce

[Return to top](#)

- Limited access to computers and the Internet limit the viability of electronic commerce, but broadcast media and text messages are useful.
- The introduction and the use of ATM and credit cards by local commercial banks are enhancing business practices in the country though paying by cash is still most dominant..

Trade Promotion and Advertising

[Return to top](#)

- Benin's lively press and diverse broadcast media are excellent marketing resources. In addition to the public daily newspaper, "La Nation," there are more than thirty daily newspapers published in Cotonou. Television outlets include the national TV stations, ORTB (www.ortb.bj) and the Benin Business Channel (BB24), and five private TV stations: LC2 (www.lc2international.tv), Golfe TV, Canal 3, Ado TV, TV Ilema, and Tele Carrefour. Radio outlets include 78 private radio stations as well as the radio division of the national broadcast corporation ORTB (www.ortb.bj), ORTB, Golfe, and Canal 3 broadcast via satellite to several African, European, North American and Asian countries. Cell phone text messages are also used for advertising.

Pricing

[Return to top](#)

- Many Beninese consumers have little disposable income and are extremely price sensitive across the range of consumer goods. However, there is a growing number of consumers for high-end merchandise.
- Transactions other than salaries and agricultural inputs to a Value Added Tax (VAT) of 18% of gross value. There is a duty of 48% for most imported goods to be sold in Benin.
- U.S. exporters should provide prices on a CIF (Cost, Insurance and Freight) basis. New U.S. exporters should require an irrevocable letter of credit prior to shipping.

Sales Service/Customer Support

[Return to top](#)

- Beninese clients may expect maintenance services to be included in the purchase price of durable goods. Sellers should clarify this point with clients, and may wish to factor customer service support into the purchase price or negotiate an after-sale support agreement at the time of purchase.

- The GOB's office responsible for the protection of intellectual property is the Government Patent Office ANPPI (Agence Nationale de la Propriété Industrielle):
01 BP 363
Cotonou, Benin
Tel: +229 21-21 32 11 51
Email: cenapi02@yahoo.fr

Protecting Your Intellectual Property in Benin:

Several general principles are important for effective management of intellectual property (IP) rights in Benin. First, it is important to have an overall strategy to protect your IP. Second, IP is protected differently in Benin than in the U.S. Third, rights must be registered and enforced in Benin, under local laws. Your U.S. trademark and patent registrations will not protect you in Benin. There is no such thing as an "international copyright" that will automatically protect an author's writings throughout the entire world. Protection against unauthorized use in a particular country depends, basically, on the national laws of that country. However, most countries do offer copyright protection to foreign works under certain conditions, and these conditions have been greatly simplified by international copyright treaties and conventions.

Registration of patents and trademarks is on a first-in-time, first-in-right basis, so you should consider applying for trademark and patent protection even before selling your products or services in the Benin market. It is vital that companies understand that intellectual property is primarily a private right and that the U.S. government generally cannot enforce rights for private individuals in Benin. It is the responsibility of the rights' holders to register, protect, and enforce their rights where relevant, retaining their own counsel and advisors. Companies may wish to seek advice from local attorneys or IP consultants who are experts in Benin law. The U.S. Commercial Service can provide a list of local lawyers upon request.

While the U.S. Government stands ready to assist, there is little we can do if the rights holders have not taken these fundamental steps necessary to securing and enforcing their IP in a timely fashion. Moreover, in many countries, rights holders who delay enforcing their rights on a mistaken belief that the USG can provide a political resolution to a legal problem may find that their rights have been eroded or abrogated due to legal doctrines such as statutes of limitations, laches, estoppel, or unreasonable delay in prosecuting a law suit. In no instance should U.S. Government advice be seen as a substitute for the obligation of a rights holder to promptly pursue its case.

It is always advisable to conduct due diligence on potential partners. Negotiate from the position of your partner and give your partner clear incentives to honor the contract. A good partner is an important ally in protecting IP rights. Consider carefully, however, whether to permit your partner to register your IP rights on your behalf. Doing so may

create a risk that your partner will list itself as the IP owner and fail to transfer the rights should the partnership end. Keep an eye on your cost structure and reduce the margins (and the incentive) of would-be bad actors. Projects and sales in Benin require constant attention. Work with legal counsel familiar with Benin laws to create a solid contract that includes non-compete clauses, and confidentiality/non-disclosure provisions.

It is also recommended that small and medium-size companies understand the importance of working together with trade associations and organizations to support efforts to protect IP and stop counterfeiting. There are a number of these organizations, both Benin or U.S.-based. These include:

- The U.S. Chamber and local American Chambers of Commerce
- National Association of Manufacturers (NAM)
- International Intellectual Property Alliance (IIPA)
- International Trademark Association (INTA)
- The Coalition Against Counterfeiting and Piracy
- International Anti-Counterfeiting Coalition (IACC)
- Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America (PhRMA)
- Biotechnology Industry Organization (BIO)

IP Resources

A wealth of information on protecting IP is freely available to U.S. rights holders. Some excellent resources for companies regarding intellectual property include the following:

- For information about patent, trademark, or copyright issues -- including enforcement issues in the US and other countries -- call the STOP! Hotline: **1-866-999-HALT** or register at www.StopFakes.gov.
- For more information about registering trademarks and patents (both in the U.S. as well as in foreign countries), contact the US Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO) at: **1-800-786-9199**.
- For more information about registering for copyright protection in the US, contact the US Copyright Office at: **1-202-707-5959**.
- For more information about how to evaluate, protect, and enforce intellectual property rights and how these rights may be important for businesses, a free online training program is available at www.stopfakes.gov.
- For US small and medium-size companies, the Department of Commerce offers a "SME IP Advisory Program" available through the American Bar Association that provides one hour of free IP legal advice for companies with concerns in Brazil,

China, Egypt, India, Russia, and . For details and to register, visit:
http://www.abanet.org/intlaw/intlproj/iprprogram_consultation.html

- For information on obtaining and enforcing intellectual property rights and market-specific IP Toolkits visit: www.StopFakes.gov This site is linked to the USPTO website for registering trademarks and patents (both in the U.S. as well as in foreign countries), the U.S. Customs & Border Protection website to record registered trademarks and copyrighted works (to assist customs in blocking imports of IP-infringing products) and allows you to register for Webinars on protecting IP.

The U.S. Commerce Department has positioned IP attachés in key markets around the world. You can get contact information for the IP attaché who covers Benin at:

Maria Elena Rivero
International Trade Specialist
Benin, Burkina Faso Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, Congo, DRC, Niger,
Togo, and WAEMU
Office of Africa
International Trade Administration
U.S. Department of Commerce
Tel: 202-482-5708
Fax: 202-482-5198
Email: Maria.Rivero@trade.gov

Due Diligence

[Return to top](#)

- Benin's Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the GOB's Ministry of Commerce can provide information on companies doing business in Benin to verify their bona fides.
- Embassy Cotonou's Economic and Commercial Section is frequently required to warn U.S. businesses and individuals about "419" cases, named for the section of Nigeria's Criminal Code dealing with economic crimes. Attempts are made to defraud victims using a variety of scams, which often request funds or bank account information to expedite a commercial transaction. Examples of these scams have included goods orders ostensibly from the GOB, non-governmental organizations, or charitable organizations, for quantities of computers, cellular phones, and frozen poultry. Unsolicited requests for participation in such schemes should be verified through the Embassy's Economic/Commercial

Section. Similarly, requests for a large up-front "registration fee" ostensibly required by the Beninese government have been used to swindle exporters. To order International Company Profile service in Benin, U.S. exporters may contact the U.S. Embassy-Cotonou and their nearest Export Assistance Center in the U.S.

Local Professional Services

[Return to top](#)

- The GOB has established a one-stop Business Registration Center to facilitate registration of new businesses. Investors are strongly encouraged to hire a local notary, whose services are required for most formal documentation including Notaries. A list of attorneys licensed in Benin may be found at <http://cotonou.usembassy.gov/lawyers3.html>
- The U.S. Embassy's Economic and Commercial Section can assist U.S. companies in identifying potential local professional services.

Web Resources

[Return to top](#)

- U.S. exporters seeking export information and assistance or country-specific commercial information should consult with their nearest Export Assistance Center or the U.S. Department of Commerce's Trade Information Center at (800) USA-TRADE, or go to one of the following web sites: www.buyusa.gov, www.export.gov, or www.trade.gov, or <http://cotonou.usembassy.gov/>.
- U.S. exporters can also contact the Benin Agency for Trade at www.abepec.bj, and Benin Investment Promotion Center, at www.cpibenin.com for additional information.

[Return to table of contents](#)

[Return to table of contents](#)

Chapter 4: Leading Sectors for U.S. Export and Investment

Commercial Sectors

- Cosmetics/Toiletries
- Autos/Light Trucks/Vans
- Textile Machinery
- Tourism Infrastructure
- Telecommunications Equipment
- Energy

Agricultural Sectors

Cosmetics/Toiletries (COS)

Overview

[Return to top](#)

U.S.-origin cosmetics and hair care products are popular in Benin. These products are imported by wholesalers or purchased in small quantities from the U.S. by retailers for local resale and re-exportation to Nigeria, Niger, Congo-Brazzaville, DRC, and Cameroon.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

[Return to top](#)

Skin and hair care products, nail care products, and toiletries.

Opportunities

[Return to top](#)

Wholesale sales and distribution of inexpensive cosmetics for local sale and for re-export to Nigeria are an outstanding opportunity.

Web Resources

[Return to top](#)

Beninese cosmetics importers usually attend the annual COSMPROF trade show in the U.S.: www.cosmoprofnorthamerica.com

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Autos/Light/Van (AUT)

Autos/Light Trucks/Van (AUT)

Overview

[Return to top](#)

The market for new and used cars, especially for re-export to Nigeria and Niger, continues to grow. The demand for buses is also good, especially for public transportation in Cotonou and intercity transport among Benin's commercial hubs.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

[Return to top](#)

Used cars and engines, and spare parts are the best prospects.

Opportunities

[Return to top](#)

The GOB regularly invites tenders to renew its vehicle fleet. The demand for vehicles in Nigeria re-exported from Benin is expected to remain strong. The GOB also encourages businesses to take advantage of import duty free on new buses for intercity transportation.

Web Resources

[Return to top](#)

Government of Benin: www.gouv.bj

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Textile Machinery (TXM)

Overview

[Return to top](#)

Benin's cotton sector, although modest, accounts for about 70% of production for exports. Only 3% of the country's production is locally processed.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

[Return to top](#)

Ginning equipment and textile sewing machinery are the best prospects

Opportunities

[Return to top](#)

Opportunities are expected to improve as Benin's cotton sector recovers, especially for ginning equipment and parts and textile sewing equipment. There are 18 cotton gins factories in the country. Privatization of the GOB ginning factories lead to imports of more ginning equipment. The government's hopes for the cotton sector include the creation of an integrated sector that will allow cotton products such as textiles to be exported to the U.S. under the benefits provided by the African Growth and Opportunities Act.

Web Resources

[Return to top](#)

Government of Benin: www.gouv.bj

Export-Import Bank of United States of America: <http://www.exim.gov>

United States Trade Development Agency: www.ustda.gov

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Tourism Infrastructure (AB)

Overview

[Return to top](#)

Benin is an attractive tourist destination in West Africa, the fifth most popular after Cote d'Ivoire, Senegal, Ghana, and Nigeria, and has potential demand for tourism infrastructure. The government has declared the beachfront zone west of Cotonou between the airport and the city of Ouidah as a priority for the development of tourist infrastructure. The GOB encourages development of hotels and leisure facilities in this zone.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

[Return to top](#)

Construction of recreational centers and hotels are the best prospects.

Opportunities

[Return to top](#)

The GOB offers incentives for foreign investors interested in building hotels in that beachfront area. Investors can obtain duty exemptions on building materials and equipment for such projects.

Web Resources

[Return to top](#)

Office of Execution of the Tourism Project or Cellule d'Execution de Projet de Developpement Touristique (CEPDC-RP):

Email: laroutedespeches@yahoo.fr

Export-Import Bank of United States of America: <http://www.exim.gov>

United States Trade Development Agency: www.ustda.gov.

For additional information contact:

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Telecommunications Equipment (TEL)

Overview

[Return to top](#)

Telecommunications is one the most lucrative sectors, with five mobile service providers to over four million subscribers in the country.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

[Return to top](#)

GSM equipment.

Opportunities

[Return to top](#)

Supply of spare and new telecommunications equipment to GSM service providers.

Web Resources

[Return to top](#)

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Energy

Overview

[Return to top](#)

Improving Benin's ability to meet its energy needs, particularly ensuring adequate access to electricity, is a critical goal to support economic development and foreign investment. Benin depends on Nigeria and Ghana for the majority of its energy, but continues to suffer from insufficient supply. Energy is one of the five priority sectors the government has focused on to attract foreign investment.

Sub-Sector Best Prospects

[Return to top](#)

Currently, Benin consumes 180 MW per day. The current need is estimated at 200 MW and is expected to rise to 300 MW by 2015. A number of feasibility studies have concluded that the country has a potential of 600 MW electricity supply. The government aims to achieve 2,000 MW capacity through Public Private Partnership.

Opportunities

[Return to top](#)

A number of opportunities exist in power generation. In 2013, U.S. company Combustion Associates, Inc. (CAI) completed installation of an 80 MW gas turbine power plant at Marie Gleta in Benin at a cost of \$67 million. In 2013, U.S. company Hunt Oil initiated off-shore oil exploration activities in Benin.

Web Resources

[Return to top](#)

www.gouv.bj

Agricultural Sectors

[Return to top](#)

Currently trade between Benin and the United States is small, but interest in U.S. products is growing. U.S. agricultural exports to Benin increased 70% in CY 2013 calendar year to reach a record \$28.9 million. The leading U.S. export items were poultry meats and products, rice, and condiments and sauces. The best prospects for U.S. agricultural exports include rice, poultry meat, wheat, corn, soybeans, canned fruits and vegetables, tomato sauce/ketchup, vegetable oil, fruit juices, pasta, wine and other spirits, powdered milk, energy drinks, mayonnaise, and snack foods. Benin has been eligible for the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) since the program began in 2000. It qualified for AGOA textile and apparel benefits in January 2004.

Benin's traditional trade links with the EU, in particular France and Belgium, remain strong. Chinese foodstuffs are available in open-air markets and supermarkets. Benin's major trade partners include Nigeria, France, Belgium, Spain, Switzerland, Argentina, Brazil, U.S., China, and the United Arab Emirates.

Major regional trading partners include Niger, Togo, Nigeria, and Burkina Faso. Estimates of annual trade with these countries are extremely difficult to determine, but some sources indicate that Benin exports about 15,000 metric tons of corn and 1,500 metric tons of rice to Nigeria, 6000 metric tons of corn to Niger, 1400 mt of corn and 2000 mt of rice to Togo. Vegetables and animals move across these borders in large amounts in regular patterns. In "crisis years" where local crops are underproduced, Benin has sourced as much as 9500 mt of corn and 950 mt of rice from Togo, and 6000 mt of rice and 1800 mt of corn from Nigeria.

Nigeria's 170 million people and the country's income from oil also influence the economy of Benin significantly. Informal trade between Nigeria and Benin is substantial.

Importers take advantage of Nigeria's high tariff changes and porous borders to export unrecorded rice, poultry products and other food and agricultural products to Nigeria. Trade sources estimate that more than 85 percent of these types of products that are shipped to Benin are meant for onward sales into Nigeria through informal cross-border trading activities. While Nigerian brokers can travel up to farms in Benin to buy vegetables, local buyers often transport their fruits, mostly pineapple and oranges to markets on the Benin-Nigeria border.

Top Ten Leading Agricultural Exports and Imports

Exports by Quantity, including re-exports	Imports by Quantity	Exports by Value, including re-exports	Imports by Value
Palm Oil	Palm Oil	Palm Oil	Chicken Meat
Cashew Nuts	Refined Sugar	Cashew Nuts	Turkey Meat
Refined Sugar	Chicken Meat	Cotton Lint	Refined Sugar
Cotton Lint	Turkey Meat	Chicken Meat	Palm Oil
Chicken Meat	Wheat Flour	Refined Sugar	Prepared Foods
Cottonseed	Apples	Turkey Meat	Apples
Food Wastes	Wheat	Palm Kernel Oil	Confectionary Sugar
Turkey Meat	Prepared Foods	Cottonseed Oil	Wheat Flour
Cottonseed Cake	Peanut Oil	Cottonseed	Wine
Palm Kernel Oil	Tomato Paste	Cotton Lintner	Whole Milk

Source: FAOSTAT

Food Standards, Product Registration and Regulations

There is no well-defined system for the elaboration of food standards and the Codex committee is not fully functional. Benin's food standards are aligned with international CODEX Alimentarius standards. The United States has sponsored focal points (contacts) in the past couple of years to attend regional Codex Meetings.

Trade Barriers

Benin is signatory to all international trade conventions under the aegis of the WTO and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Also, Benin is a member of the trade agreement between the European Union, Africa, and Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP-EU), and the regional and sub-regional economic unions such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and The West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), and it is party to the African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA).

Benin applies a common external tariff (CET –*Tarif Exteriur Common*, TEC in French) together with other countries belonging to the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU - *l'UEMOA* in French) - Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea Bissau,

Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo. The CET establishes four categories of products on which tariffs are zero, five, 10, and 20 percent. Benin's enactment of the CET and its accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) have eliminated many trade barriers.

Benin has signed bilateral trade agreements for the promotion and the protection of investments with the Germany, Tunisia, Switzerland, China, Portugal, Greece, France, and the United States.

Currently imports of all products are allowed and there are no indications that this will change in the foreseeable future. Post has only dealt with a two trade issues since 2010 which were easily and successfully resolved.

General Import and Inspection Procedures

Documents related to import requirements vary depending on the type of the imported goods and they are not specific to food inspection. In general, the documents to be produced by importers before the clearing of goods are the invoice, bill of lading, and pre-shipment inspection certificate issued by BUREAU VERITAS Group, one of the world leaders for controls and inspection, with a network that represents more than 1,000 offices and 330 laboratories (<http://www.bureauveritas.com>), the importer's import license, attestation of origin of the goods (originated from a WAEMU or ECOWAS member state) and an animal or plant health inspection SPS certificate if appropriate. Further information can be obtained from the "*Direction de l'Application et de la Reglementation*" or Office of Regulation Application of Benin's Customs Service at +229-21318740.

[Return to table of contents](#)

[Return to table of contents](#)

Chapter 5: Trade Regulations, Customs and Standards

- [Import Tariffs](#)
- [Trade Barriers](#)
- [Import Requirements and Documentation](#)
- [U.S. Export Controls](#)
- [Temporary Entry](#)
- [Labeling and Marking Requirements](#)
- [Prohibited and Restricted Imports](#)
- [Customs Regulations and Contact Information](#)
- [Standards](#)
- [Trade Agreements](#)
- [Web Resources](#)

Import Tariffs

[Return to top](#)

Benin, together with other countries belonging to the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) and the CFA Zone, including Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo, implements the “Tarif Extérieur Commun” (A Single External Tariff - SET.) The SET is a standardized tariff applied to imported goods for WAEMU member states. The SET comprises duties and taxes that include: Customs Duty (DD: the rate varies between 0 and 20% depending of the nature of the goods), Community Solidarity Deduction (PSC: 1%), Statistical Duty (RS: 1%), Import Cyclical Tax (TCI: 10%), and Regressive Protection Tax (TDP: 10% and 20%).

The SET establishes four categories of products on which customs duties are levied: 0% on drugs, books and birth control items; 5% on essential goods, basic raw materials, capital goods and specific inputs (semi-manufactured and manufactured goods used by local industries); 10% on inputs and intermediary products; 20% on final consumption goods and goods imported from outside of the WAEMU zone, including frozen fish, used clothing, milk, oil, wheat flour, nuts, canned fish, and tobacco products.

In general, imports from non WAEMU countries for local consumption are subject to 48% import duty on the value of the goods. On top of these customs duties, importers also are required to pay 18% Value-Added-Tax (VAT) at the point of entry.

Further information on customs procedures in Benin may be obtained on the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MDEF) website at www.gouv.bj, www.finances.bj, and www.izf.net.

Trade Barriers

[Return to top](#)

Benin's enactment of the SET and Benin's adherence to the WTO has eliminated many trade barriers. The implementation of single one-stop-shop for cargo clearance has facilitated speedy offloading of goods entering the country or en route to neighboring countries.

Import Requirements and Documentation

[Return to top](#)

Documents related to import requirements vary depending on the type of the imported goods. In general, documents to be produced by importers before the clearing of goods are the invoice, bill of lading, inspection certificate (<http://www.bureauveritas.com>), the importer's import license, attestation of origin of the goods (if from a WAEMU or ECOWAS member state) and an animal or plant health inspection certificate, if appropriate.

Further Information can be obtained from the "Direction de l'Application et de la Reglementation" or Office of Regulation Application of Benin's Customs Service at +229-21318740.

U.S. Export Controls

[Return to top](#)

U.S. companies exporting to Benin must adhere to the requirements of the U.S. Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) www.bis.doc.gov, which regulates the export and re-export of sensitive goods and technologies.

Temporary Entry

[Return to top](#)

Benin allows temporary entry of non-prohibited goods. The temporary entry is granted on request addressed to the Director General of Benin Customs prior to disembarkation and to the relevant section of the Ministry of Economy and Finance. It allows calculating the duties and taxes receivable based on the duration of the depreciation of the equipment and on the duration of its utilization in Benin.

The goods that benefit from temporary entry include equipment imported for public works such as trucks, handling equipment, construction camp materiel, drilling machines, light vehicles and others. Spare parts for equipment and machines used within the framework of public works are also exonerated.

When the temporary entry period ends, the beneficiary company may: (i) pay duties and taxes if it wants to keep the goods or equipment in Benin, (ii) re-export the equipment, (iii) place such goods in warehouse or depot storage until its final destination is known, or (iv) request an extension of the initial temporary entry authorization.

Labeling and Marking Requirements

[Return to top](#)

There are no specific labeling requirements for goods. Well-labeled goods enjoy quicker identification and customs clearance. However, Beninese law does not allow any foreign, natural or manufactured goods to leave or enter Benin if those goods are falsely labeled to reflect that they are from Benin or a country with which Benin has signed a brand protection agreement. No goods without attestation of the country of origin and or not marked as “Imported” are allowed to enter Benin.

Prohibited and Restricted Imports

[Return to top](#)

The import of guns, ammunitions, narcotics (except those accepted for medical use), and materials that may endanger the environment are prohibited.

Customs Regulations and Contact Information

[Return to top](#)

Goods are cleared by registered clearing agents hired by the importer. All required documents are handled by such agents. Further information on Benin customs procedures and practices may be obtained at:

Direction Generale des Douanes et Droits Indirects

Telephone: 00 229 21 315703/315548

Fax: 00 229 21 316786

Benin Customs Website: www.douanes-benin.net/ or GOB Website: www.finances.bj

Direction de l'Application et de la Réglementation

Tel. +229-21318740

Benin Customs www.douanes-benin.net/ or GOB Website: www.finances.bj

A customs clearance one-stop-shop, Societe d'Exploitation du Guichet Unique (SEGUB) has been operational in Benin since October 2011. SEGUB issues a receipt/slip (Bordereau de Frais Unique-BFU) to the clearing agent once the required clearing documents are submitted. Once issued, the BFU enables agents to remove cargo from the port within 24 hours. Additional and contact information on BFU and SEGUB are available at www.segub.bj.

Standards

[Return to top](#)

- [Overview](#)
- [Standards Organizations](#)
- [Conformity Assessment](#)
- [Product Certification](#)
- [Accreditation](#)

- [Publication of Technical Regulations](#)
- [Labeling and Marking](#)
- [Contacts](#)

Overview

[Return to top](#)

Benin uses the metric system for measurements and weights, 220 Volts for electricity.

Standards Organizations

[Return to top](#)

The Benin Center for Standardization and Quality Management (CEBENOR), which opened in July 2000, grants approval for and disseminates government standards on all products and services. CEBENOR assists certification of product quality and assists in obtaining certificates of conformity to standards.

Tel: +229 21310449

Email: cebenorbenin@yahoo.fr

NIST Notify U.S. Service

Member countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) are required under the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT Agreement) to report to the WTO all proposed technical regulations that could affect trade with other Member countries. **Notify U.S.** is a free, web-based e-mail subscription service that offers an opportunity to review and comment on proposed foreign technical regulations that can affect your access to international markets. Register online at Internet URL: <http://www.nist.gov/notifyus/>.

Conformity Assessment

[Return to top](#)

Conformity assessment is carried by a number of private and public organizations. They include Food Safety Control Office (DANA), the Department of Pharmacies, and the Department of Metrology and Quality Standards, and Benin Control pre-shipment inspection services.

Product Certification

[Return to top](#)

The Direction de l'Alimentation et de la Nutrition Appliquee (DANA -- Food Safety Control Board) and the Department of Animal Husbandry of the Ministry of Agricultural in charge of imported frozen meat and fish inspection in the Benin Ministry of

Agriculture are the only agencies allowed to test food products prior to clearance at the port of entry

DANA
BP 295
Porto-Novu, Benin,
Tel. +229-20-212670, Fax: +229-20-213963
E-mail: yombomalete@yahoo.fr

Direction de l'Elevage,
Contact: Dr. Philomene Koudande Yemadje
BP: 2041,
Tel. +229-31331815
Cotonou, Benin,
Email: yphilomene@yahoo.fr

Direction des Pharmacies (Pharmaceutical Products Control Office) is under the Benin Ministry of Health and tests drugs at the port of entry before clearance.

;
Contact: Dr. Alfred Dansou
Tel/Fax: +229-21-332178
email: kissavic@yahoo.fr

Accreditation

[Return to top](#)

The Direction de l'Alimentation et de la Nutrition Appliquee (DANA -- Food Safety Control Board) and the Department of Animal Husbandry of the Ministry of Agricultural in charge of imported frozen meat and fish inspection in the Benin Ministry of Agriculture are the only agencies allowed to test food products prior to clearance at the port of entry.

DANA
BP 295
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Email: kissavic@yahoo.fr

Publication of Technical Regulations

[Return to top](#)

The state owned daily “La Nation” is the national gazette where technical publications are posted.

Labeling and Marking

[Return to top](#)

Labeling of imported products should include, depending on the nature of the product, the name of the product, the country of origin, the manufacture and the expiration dates.

Contacts

[Return to top](#)

DANA
BP 295
Porto-Novo, Benin,
Tel. +229-20-212670, Fax: +229-20-213963
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Trade Agreements

[Return to top](#)

Benin is signatory to all relevant international trade conventions of the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Benin is also part of the trade agreement between the European Union, Africa, Caribbean and Pacific countries. Benin is also a member of regional and sub-regional economic unions such as ECOWAS and WAEMU. In 1993, Benin ratified the convention providing for the establishment of the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency that aims for improvement of investments opportunities in developing countries and promotion of investment flows.

Benin has signed bilateral trade agreements for the promotion and the protection of investments with the Federal Republic of Germany, Tunisia, Switzerland, and People's Republic of China, Portugal, Greece, France, and the United States.

Web Resources

[Return to top](#)

None

[Return to table of contents](#)

[Return to table of contents](#)

Chapter 6: Investment Climate

- [Openness to Foreign Investment](#)
- [Conversion and Transfer Policies](#)
- [Expropriation and Compensation](#)
- [Dispute Settlement](#)
- [Performance Requirements and Incentives](#)
- [Right to Private Ownership and Establishment](#)
- [Protection of Property Rights](#)
- [Transparency of Regulatory System](#)
- [Efficient Capital Markets and Portfolio Investment](#)
- [Competition from State Owned Enterprises](#)
- [Corporate Social Responsibility](#)
- [Political Violence](#)
- [Corruption](#)
- [Bilateral Investment Agreements](#)
- [OPIC and Other Investment Insurance Programs](#)
- [Labor](#)
- [Foreign-Trade Zones/Free Ports](#)
- [Foreign Direct Investment Statistics](#)
- [Web Resources](#)

Executive Summary:

Benin continues its efforts to attract private investment in support of economic development. The Government of Benin in conjunction with the World Bank Group, the African Development Bank, the Islamic Development Bank, and the United Nations Development Program, has organized an investment forum scheduled for June 2014 in Paris to promote foreign investment in Benin. The forum, part of a three-day roundtable for the financing of development projects in Benin will assemble international donors, private sector firms and prospective sponsors of private sector projects, non-governmental organizations, and members of the Beninese diaspora to discuss the business climate in Benin and promote dialogue about specific investment opportunities. In terms of Benin's economic development goals, the Government has identified infrastructure including the port and railways projects; energy; mining; tourism; and health and agriculture among its priorities.

Benin's 2013 population is estimated at approximately 9.7 million. Benin is a low human development country and the 2012 UNDP Human Development Index ranked the country 166th out of 186. Life expectancy at birth is 56 years and the illiteracy rate for persons aged 15 and above is approximately 58 percent.

Benin's overall macroeconomic conditions were positive in 2013. According to estimates by Benin's National Institute of Economic Analysis and Statistics (INSAE), gross domestic product (GDP) grew by 5.6 percent in 2013 (opposed to 5.4 in 2012, and 3.1 in 2011), largely driven by Benin's cotton industry, improvements at the Autonomous Port of Cotonou, and developments in telecommunications. The country's GDP is roughly 71 percent services, 21 percent agriculture, and 8 percent manufacturing. Cotton production was 240,000 metric tons in 2012/2013. Port customs revenue accounts for 85 of the country customs revenue: 2013-\$770 million; 2012-\$667 million; 2011-\$548 million. The inflation rate was 1 percent in 2013. US-Benin trade balance favors the US: 2013 - \$604.3 million; 2012 - \$570.9; 2011 - \$615.4 million. Combustion Associates Incorporated (CAI), a U.S. company, has completed a USD 68.42 million power plant for the GOB. In 2013, Hunt Oil, a Texas-based company, initiated off-shore oil exploration activities in Benin.

The **Port of Cotonou** is the largest economic component of Benin's economy with revenues projected to account for more than 40% of Benin's annual budget. Significant investment in the port by the Millennium Challenge Corporation has helped attract private sector investment; encouraged security and management enhancing reforms; and contributed to increase customs receipts and cargo processing capacity. Creation of an offsite customs clearance one-stop-shop has helped reduce corruption. Run by private contractor "Société d'Exploitation du Guichet Unique (SEGUB)," the process allows clearing agents to submit documentation to authorities at a single location and make fee payment at a designated bank. SEGUB then issues a receipt which authorizes removal of corresponding cargo from the port.

The Government aims to realize the port's full economic potential by supporting ongoing efforts to modernize the port, stem corruption, and improve access to markets. The majority of cargo processed through the Port of Cotonou is destined for locations outside of Benin, primarily Nigeria and Niger.

Openness to Foreign Investment

[Return to top](#)

The Government of Benin (GOB) encourages foreign investment. The Presidential Investment Council (PIC), established in 2006 to reinforce dialogue between the Government and investors, aims to speed implementation of reforms and improve the business environment. The PIC works to reduce, and where possible, eliminate administrative barriers to business startup by bringing together various licensing offices under one roof.

Benin's investment code, revised in July 2008, establishes benefits under different investment regimes and grants extensive discretionary power to the Investment Control Commission at the Ministry of Commerce (MC). The MC operates a 'guichet unique' or single investment office (as noted above) to minimize bureaucratic delays for investors and facilitate registration of new businesses. The center has successfully reduced processing times for construction permits and registration of new companies. In addition,

in 2011 the Government established a full-service office to expedite customs clearances, reduce the cost of clearances, and minimize processing of cargo at the Port of Cotonou.

Beninese law guarantees the right to own and transfer private property. Benin's court system enforces contracts, but the legal process is slow. An American firm wishing to establish a business in Benin should work with an established local partner and retain a competent Beninese attorney. A list of English-speaking lawyers and legal counselors is available from the Embassy's commercial section and on the Embassy's website <http://cotonou.usembassy.gov>.

Opportunities for foreign investment may arise from privatization of the following parastatals: SBEE (electricity), SONEB (water), SOBEMAP (port cargo handling), Benin Telecoms (BT) S.A., and La Poste du Benin S.A. (mail). Foreign companies are invited to bid on privatizations. The bidding process is open and well-publicized. The GOB recently issued a bid which would partially divest the capital of Libercom, the cell phone service provider of BT.

1.1.1. Tables 1 Benin

TABLE 1: The following chart summarizes several well-regarded indices and rankings.

Measure	Year	Rank or value	Website Address
TI Corruption Perceptions index	2013	94 of 177	http://cpi.transparency.org/cpi2013/results/
Heritage Foundation's Economic Freedom index	2013	113 of 177	http://www.heritage.org/index/ranking
World Bank's Doing Business Report "Ease of Doing Business"	2013	174 of 189	http://doingbusiness.org/rankings
Global Innovation Index	2013	127 of 142	http://www.globalinnovationindex.org/content.aspx?page=gii-full-report-2013#pdfopener
World Bank GNI per capita	2012	USD 750	http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.CD

TABLE 1B - Scorecards: The Millennium Challenge Corporation, a U.S. Government entity charged with delivering development grants to countries that have demonstrated a commitment to reform, produced scorecards for countries with a 2012 per capita gross national income (GNI) of \$4,085 or less. A list of countries/economies with MCC scorecards and links to those scorecards is available here:

<http://www.mcc.gov/pages/selection/scorecards>. Details on each of the MCC's indicators and a guide to reading the scorecards are available here:

<http://www.mcc.gov/documents/reports/reference-2013001142401-fy14-guide-to-the-indicators.pdf>.

Conversion and Transfer Policies

[Return to top](#)

Benin is a member of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU). Benin's currency is the CFA Franc, issued by the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO). The CFA Franc is pegged to the Euro at CFA 655.957/Euro. The currency exchange rate as of January 18 is approximately CFA Franc 491/dollar.

Foreign exchange is readily available. There are no restrictions on the remittance of profits by companies that invest in Benin. Remittance of profits by individual resident investors is not restricted.

Expropriation and Compensation

[Return to top](#)

Based on a 1992 privatization law, the Government is forbidden from nationalizing private enterprises operating in Benin.

In conformity with World Bank structural reform commitments, the Government opened the cotton sector and its related components (namely ginning and inputs) to the private sector in the 1990s, and in 2008 partially divested the ginning industry parastatal SONAPRA ([Société Nationale pour la Promotion Agricole](#)) while maintaining regulatory control over the sector. In October 2012, prompted by concerns over performance and mismanagement the Government assumed control of cotton production and ginning holdings. In 2006 the Government took over the management of previously privatized oil company SONACOP on the grounds that the company was in complete financial disarray, lacked funds for its operations, and was unable to provide oil products to its gas stations throughout the country.

Dispute Settlement

[Return to top](#)

Benin is a member of the Organization for the Harmonization of African Business Law, known by its French acronym OHADA, and has adopted OHADA's Universal Commercial Code to manage commercial disputes and bankruptcies. Benin is also a member of OHADA's Common Court of Justice and Arbitration and the International Center for the Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID).

Benin's civil courts handle commercial cases, although the backlog of civil cases may result in delays of more than two years before a case proceeds to trial. Benin's courts will enforce foreign court judgments.

Performance Requirements and Incentives

[Return to top](#)

Benin's 2008 Investment Code includes incentives such as tax reductions for investors. Depending on the size of the investment, investors may not owe taxes on profits, exports of finished products, or imports of industrial equipment for up to one year from the date the business is registered. To benefit from these incentives, investors must meet several criteria including employing a minimum number of Beninese nationals, safeguarding the environment, and meeting nationally accepted accounting standards. The Investment Control Commission monitors companies that receive these incentives to ensure compliance.

Right to Private Ownership and Establishment

[Return to top](#)

The right to private ownership and investment is respected. Beninese law guarantees freedom of commerce; choice of customers and suppliers; free movement throughout the country; the right of foreign employees and their family members to leave the country; and freedom from government interference in the management of private enterprises.

Protection of Property Rights

[Return to top](#)

Secured interests in real and personal property are recognized and enforced. Benin's legal system protects and facilitates acquisition and disposition of property, land and buildings and mortgages. Secured interests in property are registered with the Land Office of the Ministry of Finance. In January 2013, Benin's National Assembly passed the Code Foncier (**Land Property Act**) and the President signed it into law on August 14, 2013. The law facilitates acquisition of land by investors for development.

Benin is a signatory to both World Intellectual Property Organization Internet treaties. Enforcement of intellectual property rights continues to be constrained by Benin's limited capacity.

Transparency of Regulatory System

[Return to top](#)

The Government has adopted policies favoring transparency to foster competition, but the regulatory burden is still often onerous. In 2009 Benin reformed customs procedures and has been implementing more rigorous inspection and tracking of imported goods, particularly through the Port of Cotonou.

Proposed laws and regulations pertaining to investment are not published in draft form for public comment.

Efficient Capital Markets and Portfolio Investment

[Return to top](#)

Government policy supports free financial markets, subject to oversight by the Ministry of Finance and Economy and the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO). A minimum of ten commercial banks operate in Benin. Foreign investors may seek credit from Benin's private financial institutions and the WAEMU stock exchange.

There are not any restrictions for foreigner investors to establish a bank account in Benin. However, proof of residency or evidence of company registration is required to open a business bank account.

Competition from State Owned Enterprises

[Return to top](#)

Private enterprises compete with public enterprises on equal terms and conditions, except for public utilities (electricity and water) and land-line telephone service, for which the public telephone company retains a monopoly.

SOE senior management may report directly to a Government ministry or board of directors, whose seats are allocated to senior government officials and political leaders, as well as representatives of civil society and other parastatal constituencies. SOEs are required by law to publish annual reports and hold regular meetings of their boards of directors, and financial statements are reviewed by certified accountants and private auditors.

The Government of Benin has established a website detailing plans to promote good governance and transparency. (<http://www.gouvernancebenin.org/>)

Corporate Social Responsibility

[Return to top](#)

A number of private corporations systematically support corporate social responsibility, notably cellular phone service providers and banks. Such CSR efforts often follow OECD guidelines, and are an important aspect of corporate public relations.

Political Violence

[Return to top](#)

There has been no political violence affecting private investment in Benin since the end of the country's socialist period in 1990

Corruption

[Return to top](#)

Bribery is illegal and subject to up to ten years imprisonment. The Government has identified the fight against corruption as a national priority. Efforts reflecting Government focus on fighting corruption include the 2013 creation of the new National Anti-Corruption Authority (ANLC) in charge of referring corruption cases to court. By law, the ANLC has the ability to combat money laundering, electoral fraud, economic fraud, and corruption in the public and private sectors. Benin's State Audit Office is also responsible for identifying and acting against corruption in the public sector.

The Government has demonstrated strong political will to reduce corruption and has imposed administrative sanctions and removals from office against high-profile, allegedly corrupt officials. None, however, have faced prosecution in Beninese courts. Corruption remains a problem in areas including customs administration, government procurement, and the judicial system. Benin is a signatory to the UN Anticorruption Convention.

ANLC Contact:

Guy Ogoubiyi
President of ANLC
Tel. +229 21 308 686
Fax: +229 21 301 010
Email anlc.benin@yahoo.fr

Corruption, including bribery, raises the costs and risks of doing business. Corruption has a corrosive impact on both market opportunities overseas for U.S. companies and the broader business climate. It also deters international investment, stifles economic growth and development, distorts prices, and undermines the rule of law.

It is important for U.S. companies, irrespective of their size, to assess the business climate in the relevant market in which they will be operating or investing, and to have an effective compliance program or measures to prevent and detect corruption, including foreign bribery. U.S. individuals and firms operating or investing in foreign markets

should take the time to become familiar with the relevant anticorruption laws of both the foreign country and the United States in order to properly comply with them, and where appropriate, they should seek the advice of legal counsel.

The U.S. Government seeks to level the global playing field for U.S. businesses by encouraging other countries to take steps to criminalize their own companies' acts of corruption, including bribery of foreign public officials, by requiring them to uphold their obligations under relevant international conventions. A U. S. firm that believes a competitor is seeking to use bribery of a foreign public official to secure a contract should bring this to the attention of appropriate U.S. agencies, as noted below.

U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act: In 1977, the United States enacted the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), which makes it unlawful for a U.S. person, and certain foreign issuers of securities, to make a corrupt payment to foreign public officials for the purpose of obtaining or retaining business for or with, or directing business to, any person. The FCPA also applies to foreign firms and persons who take any act in furtherance of such a corrupt payment while in the United States. For more detailed information on the FCPA, see the FCPA Lay-Person's Guide at: <http://www.justice.gov/criminal/fraud/>

Other Instruments: It is U.S. Government policy to promote good governance, including host country implementation and enforcement of anti-corruption laws and policies pursuant to their obligations under international agreements. Since enactment of the FCPA, the United States has been instrumental to the expansion of the international framework to fight corruption. Several significant components of this framework are the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions (OECD Antibribery Convention), the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UN Convention), the Inter-American Convention against Corruption (OAS Convention), the Council of Europe Criminal and Civil Law Conventions, and a growing list of U.S. free trade agreements. This country is party to [add instrument to which this country is party], but generally all countries prohibit the bribery and solicitation of their public officials.

OECD Antibribery Convention: The OECD Antibribery Convention entered into force in February 1999. As of March 2009, there are 38 parties to the Convention including the United States (see <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/59/13/40272933.pdf>). Major exporters China, India, and Russia are not parties, although the U.S. Government strongly endorses their eventual accession to the Convention. The Convention obligates the Parties to criminalize bribery of foreign public officials in the conduct of international business. The United States meets its international obligations under the OECD Antibribery Convention through the U.S. FCPA. [Insert information as to whether your country is a party to the OECD Convention.]

UN Convention: The UN Anticorruption Convention entered into force on December 14, 2005, and there are 158 parties to it as of November 2011 (see <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/treaties/CAC/signatories.html>). The UN Convention is

the first global comprehensive international anticorruption agreement. The UN Convention requires countries to establish criminal and other offences to cover a wide range of acts of corruption. The UN Convention goes beyond previous anticorruption instruments, covering a broad range of issues ranging from basic forms of corruption such as bribery and solicitation, embezzlement, trading in influence to the concealment and laundering of the proceeds of corruption. The Convention contains transnational business bribery provisions that are functionally similar to those in the OECD Antibribery Convention and contains provisions on private sector auditing and books and records requirements. Other provisions address matters such as prevention, international cooperation, and asset recovery. [Insert information as to whether your country is a party to the UN Convention.]

OAS Convention: In 1996, the Member States of the Organization of American States (OAS) adopted the first international anticorruption legal instrument, the Inter-American Convention against Corruption (OAS Convention), which entered into force in March 1997. The OAS Convention, among other things, establishes a set of preventive measures against corruption, provides for the criminalization of certain acts of corruption, including transnational bribery and illicit enrichment, and contains a series of provisions to strengthen the cooperation between its States Parties in areas such as mutual legal assistance and technical cooperation. As of December 2009, the OAS Convention has 34 parties (see <http://www.oas.org/juridico/english/Sigs/b-58.html>) [Insert information as to whether your country is a party to the OAS Convention.]

Council of Europe Criminal Law and Civil Law Conventions: Many European countries are parties to either the Council of Europe (CoE) Criminal Law Convention on Corruption, the Civil Law Convention, or both. The Criminal Law Convention requires criminalization of a wide range of national and transnational conduct, including bribery, money-laundering, and account offenses. It also incorporates provisions on liability of legal persons and witness protection. The Civil Law Convention includes provisions on compensation for damage relating to corrupt acts, whistleblower protection, and validity of contracts, inter alia. The Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) was established in 1999 by the CoE to monitor compliance with these and related anti-corruption standards. Currently, GRECO comprises 49 member States (48 European countries and the United States). As of December 2011, the Criminal Law Convention has 43 parties and the Civil Law Convention has 34 (see www.coe.int/greco.) [Insert information as to whether your country is a party to the Council of Europe Conventions.]

Free Trade Agreements: While it is U.S. Government policy to include anticorruption provisions in free trade agreements (FTAs) that it negotiates with its trading partners, the anticorruption provisions have evolved over time. The most recent FTAs negotiated now require trading partners to criminalize “active bribery” of public officials (offering bribes to any public official must be made a criminal offense, both domestically and transnationally) as well as domestic “passive bribery” (solicitation of a bribe by a domestic official). All U.S. FTAs may be found at the U.S. Trade Representative Website: <http://www.ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements>. [Insert information as to whether your country has an FTA with the United States: Country [X] has a free trade

agreement (FTA) in place with the United States, the [name of FTA], which came into force. Consult USTR Website for date: <http://www.ustr.gov/trade-agreements/free-trade-agreements.>]

Local Laws: U.S. firms should familiarize themselves with local anticorruption laws, and, where appropriate, seek legal counsel. While the U.S. Department of Commerce cannot provide legal advice on local laws, the Department's U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service can provide assistance with navigating the host country's legal system and obtaining a list of local legal counsel.

Assistance for U.S. Businesses: The U.S. Department of Commerce offers several services to aid U.S. businesses seeking to address business-related corruption issues. For example, the U.S. and Foreign Commercial Service can provide services that may assist U.S. companies in conducting their due diligence as part of the company's overarching compliance program when choosing business partners or agents overseas. The U.S. Foreign and Commercial Service can be reached directly through its offices in every major U.S. and foreign city, or through its Website at www.trade.gov/cs.

The Departments of Commerce and State provide worldwide support for qualified U.S. companies bidding on foreign government contracts through the Commerce Department's Advocacy Center and State's Office of Commercial and Business Affairs. Problems, including alleged corruption by foreign governments or competitors, encountered by U.S. companies in seeking such foreign business opportunities can be brought to the attention of appropriate U.S. government officials, including local embassy personnel and through the Department of Commerce Trade Compliance Center "Report A Trade Barrier" Website at tcc.export.gov/Report_a_Barrier/index.asp.

Guidance on the U.S. FCPA: The Department of Justice's (DOJ) FCPA Opinion Procedure enables U.S. firms and individuals to request a statement of the Justice Department's present enforcement intentions under the anti-bribery provisions of the FCPA regarding any proposed business conduct. The details of the opinion procedure are available on DOJ's Fraud Section Website at www.justice.gov/criminal/fraud/fcpa. Although the Department of Commerce has no enforcement role with respect to the FCPA, it supplies general guidance to U.S. exporters who have questions about the FCPA and about international developments concerning the FCPA. For further information, see the Office of the Chief Counsel for International Counsel, U.S. Department of Commerce, Website, at http://www.ogc.doc.gov/trans_anti_bribery.html. More general information on the FCPA is available at the Websites listed below.

Exporters and investors should be aware that generally all countries prohibit the bribery of their public officials, and prohibit their officials from soliciting bribes under domestic laws. Most countries are required to criminalize such bribery and other acts of corruption by virtue of being parties to various international conventions discussed above.

POST INPUT: Public sector corruption, including bribery of public officials, [remains a major/minor challenge for U.S. firms operating in xxx xxx. Insert country specific corruption climate, enforcement, commitment and information about relevant anticorruption legislation.

Anti-Corruption Resources

Some useful resources for individuals and companies regarding combating corruption in global markets include the following:

- Information about the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA), including a “Lay-Person’s Guide to the FCPA” is available at the U.S. Department of Justice’s Website at: <http://www.justice.gov/criminal/fraud/fcpa>.
- Information about the OECD Antibribery Convention including links to national implementing legislation and country monitoring reports is available at: http://www.oecd.org/departement/0,3355,en_2649_34859_1_1_1_1_1,00.html. See also new Antibribery Recommendation and Good Practice Guidance Annex for companies: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/40/44176910.pdf>.
- General information about anticorruption initiatives, such as the OECD Convention and the FCPA, including translations of the statute into several languages, is available at the Department of Commerce Office of the Chief Counsel for International Commerce Website: http://www.ogc.doc.gov/trans_anti_bribery.html.
- Transparency International (TI) publishes an annual Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI). The CPI measures the perceived level of public-sector corruption in 180 countries and territories around the world. The CPI is available at: http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2009. TI also publishes an annual *Global Corruption Report* which provides a systematic evaluation of the state of corruption around the world. It includes an in-depth analysis of a focal theme, a series of country reports that document major corruption related events and developments from all continents and an overview of the latest research findings on anti-corruption diagnostics and tools. See <http://www.transparency.org/publications/gcr>.
- The World Bank Institute publishes Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI). These indicators assess six dimensions of governance in 213 countries, including Voice and Accountability, Political Stability and Absence of Violence, Government Effectiveness, Regulatory Quality, Rule of Law and Control of Corruption. See <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp>. The World Bank Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Surveys may also be of interest and are available at: <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/BEEPS>.
- The World Economic Forum publishes the *Global Enabling Trade Report*, which presents the rankings of the Enabling Trade Index, and includes an assessment of the

transparency of border administration (focused on bribe payments and corruption) and a separate segment on corruption and the regulatory environment. See <http://www.weforum.org/s?s=global+enabling+trade+report>.

- Additional country information related to corruption can be found in the U.S. State Department's annual *Human Rights Report* available at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/>.
- Global Integrity, a nonprofit organization, publishes its annual *Global Integrity Report*, which provides indicators for 106 countries with respect to governance and anti-corruption. The report highlights the strengths and weaknesses of national level anti-corruption systems. The report is available at: <http://report.globalintegrity.org/>.

Bilateral Investment Agreements

[Return to top](#)

Benin has bilateral investment agreements with the United States, France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Portugal, Canada, Guinea-Conakry, Ghana, Mauritius, Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso, the Netherlands, and China.

Benin does not have a bilateral taxation treaty with the United States.

OPIC and Other Investment Insurance Programs

[Return to top](#)

The Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC) offers financial underwriting for companies wishing to invest in Benin. Diplomatic missions purchase local currency (CFA) at the official BCEAO rate.

Labor

[Return to top](#)

The unemployment rate in Benin in 2012 was 14.3%. Unskilled and skilled labor and qualified professionals are generally available. The Government adheres to internationally recognized rights and labor standards. Benin's Constitution guarantees workers freedom to organize, assemble, and strike. Government authorities may declare strikes illegal if they are deemed a threat to public order or the economy and require those on strike to maintain minimum services. Approximately 75 percent of salaried employees belong to unions. There are several union confederations. Unions are independent of government and political parties. Benin's labor code and practice remain highly favorable to employees. Most of Benin's working population is engaged in agriculture or other primary-sector activities.

Foreign-Trade Zones/Free Ports

[Return to top](#)

A Foreign Trade Zone near the Benin-Nigeria border is currently operational. Foreign-owned firms have the same investment opportunities as host country entities. Companies must export at least 65 percent of their annual production to qualify for tax-free status and benefit from duty-free importation of equipment and other production inputs.

Foreign Direct Investment Statistics

[Return to top](#)

The Heritage Foundation 2013 Index of Economic Freedom reports Benin Foreign Direct Investment inflow at USD 118.5 million. Leading private investments have been made by firms based in the U.S., China, France, Germany, India, Lebanon, Italy, and Switzerland. Foreign investors have purchased textile, cement, wood, and brewing companies, and have invested in services.

TABLE 2: Key Macroeconomic data, U.S. FDI in Benin

	Benin Statistical source*		International statistical source		International Source of data (Source of Data: World Bank)
Economic Data	Year	Amount	Year	Amount	
Host Country Gross Domestic Product (GDP) <i>(Millions U.S. Dollars)</i>	Insert 2012	Amount 7,716	Insert 2012	Amount 7,557.00	http://www.worldbank.org/en/country
Foreign Direct Investment	Benin Statistical source*		USG or international statistical source		USG or international Source of data: BEA

U.S. FDI in partner country (<i>Millions U.S. Dollars, stock positions</i>)	NA	Amount NA	NA	Amount NA	NA
Host country's FDI in the United States (<i>Millions U.S. Dollars, stock positions</i>)		Amount		Amount	
Total inbound stock of FDI as % host GDP (<i>calculate</i>)	NA	Amount NA	NA	Amount	

*Source: National Institute of Economic Analysis and Statistics (Benin)

Web Resources

[Return to top](#)

Unavailable.

[Return to table of contents](#)

[Return to table of contents](#)

Chapter 7: Trade and Project Financing

- [How Do I Get Paid \(Methods of Payment\)](#)
- [How Does the Banking System Operate](#)
- [Foreign-Exchange Controls](#)
- [U.S. Banks and Local Correspondent Banks](#)
- [Project Financing](#)
- [Web Resources](#)

How Do I Get Paid (Methods of Payment)

[Return to top](#)

Letters of credit, bank drafts, bills of exchange, money wiring, checks, and cash are commonly used to make payment for imports. Within the country, cash is the most common payment method for local transactions. Businesses may accept check payments from customers with whom they are familiar. U.S. exporters, new to the Beninese market, should request an irrevocable confirmed letter of credit drawn on one of the major banks.

How Does the Banking System Operate

[Return to top](#)

The banking system in Benin is regulated by the regional central Bank, Banque Centrale des Etats de l’Afrique de l’Ouest (BCEAO) and the Banking Commission of the West African Monetary Union (Commission Bancaire de l’Union Economique et Monétaire Ouest Africaine – (UEMOA). All banks in Benin are private sector institutions and belong to either an international or regional banking group. These banks are often reluctant to lend for medium and long-term loans.

Foreign-Exchange Controls

[Return to top](#)

The local currency (CFA Franc) is pegged to the Euro at CFA 655.957 for € 1.00. Transactions requiring foreign exchange must be duly documented and approved by exchange control authorizations. Exceptions include foreign travel, foreign education or medical expenses within prescribed limits. Expatriates can remit their salaries outside Benin. Transfers within the UEMOA zone are not subjected to foreign exchange control.

Implications for US business: All investments by a US investor in Beninese companies must be declared to the Ministry of Finance.

All loans given by a US individual or company to a Beninese borrower must also be declared to the Ministry of Finance to facilitate the transfer of repayments of principal and interest.

For foreign transfers executed through BCEAO, it is required to communicate the following information: instructing party, (i) the amount in CFA Francs, amount in foreign currency, (ii) the name and address of the beneficiary, (iii) account number and banking domiciliation of the beneficiary and (iv) the purpose of the transfer and supporting documents.

U.S. Banks and Local Correspondent Banks

[Return to top](#)

Orabank is the only bank with indirect U.S. ownership. Citibank's correspondent bank in Benin is Ecobank Benin. The French bank Societe Generale operates both in the U.S. and Benin.

There are thirteen banks operating in Benin of which 12 commercial banks and two regional bank representations.

1. ECOBANK and U.S. EXIM Bank have signed a Master Guaranty Agreement to encourage medium- and long-term loans for businesses, one of the first agreements of this type within francophone Africa.

Mr. Roger Dah-Achinanon, General Manager
Rue du Gouverneur Bayol
BP 1280
Cotonou, Benin
Tel: +229 21-31-40-23
Fax: +229 21-31-33-85

Email: www.ecobank.com/countryinfo.aspx?cid=74023
Website : www.ecobankbj.com

2. Orabank, formerly Financial Bank, is member of Emerging Capital Partners, a Washington-DC based private equity firm.

Rizwan Haider, Managing Director
01 BP 2700
Cotonou, Benin
Tel: +229 21-31-31 00 / 03 / 04
Fax: +229 21-31-31-02
Email: haider.rizwan@orabank.net
Website: www.orabank.net

3. Bank of Africa—U.S. ExIm Bank has signed a Master Guaranty Agreement with Bank of Africa and ECOBANK to encourage medium- and long-term loans for businesses, the first agreement of this type within francophone Africa.

Mr. Faustin Amoussou, General Manager

08BP 0879
Cotonou, Benin
Tel: +229 21-31-32-28
Fax: +229 21-31-31-17
Email: information@boabenin.com
Website: www.boabenin.com

4. Diamond Bank—Diamond Bank belongs to Diamond Bank Public Limited Company of Nigeria.

Mr. Benedict Ihekire, General Manager
01 BP 955
Cotonou, Benin
Tel: +229 21-31-97-97/31-98-98
Fax: +229 21-31-21-42
Email: bihekire@diamondbank.com
Website: www.diamondbank.com

5. Societe Generale du Benin—SGB is a French bank opened in 2002.

Mr. Laurent Mortreuil, General Manager
01 BP 585
Avenue Clozel
Cotonou, Benin
Tel: +229 21-31-83-00
Fax: +229 21-31-82-95
Email: banque.sgb@socgen.com
Website: www.societegenerale.bj; www.societegenerale.com

6. Banque Sahelo-Sahélienne pour le Commerce et l'Investissement a Libyan sub-regional Islamic bank:

Mr. Hissene Ahmat Senoussi, General Manager
131 Rue Dakodonou,
Lot 26-F Guinkomey
08 BP 485
Cotonou, Benin
Tel: +229 21-31-87-07/21-31-87-05
Fax: +229 21-31-87-04
E-mail: bsic.benin@bsicbank.com
Website: unavailable

7. Banque Atlantique du Benin—BAB opened in 2005.

Mr. Mamady Diakite, General Manager
08 BP 0682

Cotonou, Benin
Tel: +229 21-31-10-18/21-31-10-19
Fax: +229 21-31-31-21
Email: mamady.diakite@banqueatlantique.net

8. Banque Régionale de Solidarite, BRS opened in 2005:

Mr. Roger Kokou, General Manager
01 BP 097
Cotonou, Benin
Tel: +229 21-31-80-16
Fax: +229 21-31-80-01
Email: brsbenin@intnet.bj
Website: unavailable

9. Banque Internationale du Benin (BIBE)

Mr. Romain Boko, General Manager
03 BP 2098
Cotonou, Benin
Tel. +229-21310462/21310463/21309522/21322557
Fax: +229-21311605/21310862
Email: secretariatdg@bibebank.com;
Website: www.bibebank.com

10. United Bank for Africa UBA.

Mr. Gwen Abiola-Oloke MD/CEO

United Bank for Africa
Carrefour des Trois Banaues
Avenue Pape Jean-Paul II
01 BP 2020 Cotonou, Republic of Benin
Tel: +229 21 312424; Fax : +229 21 01 16 99
eMail: gwen.abiola-oloke@ubagroup.com
Webiste: www.ubagroup.com

11. BGFIBank-Benin is a subsidiary of the French-Gabonese BGFIBank, with headquarters in Gabon. It was established in 2010 in Benin.

Mr. Myriam Adotevi
01 BP 4270
Cotonou, Benin
Tel : +229-2131334/21-31-33-48

Fax : +229-21-313339
Email: benin@bgfi.com; eqc-benin@bgfi.com
Website: unavailable

12. Banque Centrale Des Etats De L'Afrique De L'Ouest—BCEAO:

BCEAO-Benin is the Benin office of the Central Bank of the West African States, with headquarters in Dakar, Senegal.

Mr. Sebastien Evariste Bonou, National Director
BP 325
Cotonou, Benin
Tel: +229 21-31-24-66/31-24-67
Fax: +229 21-31-24-65
Email: courier.Bdn@bceao.int
Website: www.bceao.int

13. Banque Ouest Africaine de Developement—BOAD represents The West African Development Bank based in Lome, Togo.

Its Resident Chief of Mission is Mr. Daouda Berte,
01 BP 268
Agence Principale
Av. Jean Paul II
Cotonou, Benin
Tel: +229 21-31-59-35
Fax: +229 21-31-59-38
Email: dberte@bj.boad.org
www.boad.org

Project Financing

[Return to top](#)

Projects are generally financed by local banks and development finance institutions such as the World Bank, the West African Development Bank (BOAD), African Development Bank, Islamic Development Bank or European Investment Bank (EIB). Procurement is open to US bidders in most cases.

Access to the traditional project financing depends on the size of the company, verification of the borrowers' financial records by an external chartered accountant, and demonstrated access to export markets as well as the reputation of the business. Businesses will find it difficult to obtain project financing by local banks if they are not well established in Benin and do not have verifiably sound credit records.

The U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA), and the African Development Bank (ADB) offer funds for feasibility studies.

Web Resources

[Return to top](#)

Export-Import Bank of the United States: <http://www.exim.gov>

Country Limitation Schedule: http://www.exim.gov/tools/country/country_limits.html

OPIC: <http://www.opic.gov>

Trade and Development Agency: <http://www.tda.gov/>

SBA's Office of International Trade: <http://www.sba.gov/oit/>

USDA Commodity Credit Corporation: <http://www.fsa.usda.gov/cc/default.htm>

U.S. Agency for International Development: <http://www.usaid.gov>

West African Economic and Monetary Union or UEMOA: <http://www.uemoa.int>

West African States Central Bank or Banque Centrale des Etats de l'Afrique de l'Ouest – (BCEAO): <http://www.bceao.int>

West Africa Development Bank or BOAD: <http://www.boad.org>

Ecobank Group: www.ecobank.com

Societe Generale du Benin or SGB: www.sogebenin.com

BOA-Benin: www.boabenin.com

Diamond Bank: www.diamondbank.com

BIBE: www.bibebank.com

UBA Group: www.ubagroup.com

BCEAO: www.bceao.int

BOAD: www.boad.org

[Return to table of contents](#)

Chapter 8: Business Travel

- [Business Customs](#)
- [Travel Advisory](#)
- [Visa Requirements](#)
- [Telecommunications](#)
- [Transportation](#)
- [Language](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Local Time, Business Hours and Holidays](#)
- [Temporary Entry of Materials and Personal Belongings](#)
- [Web Resources](#)

Business Customs

[Return to top](#)

Business relations are often conducted in person in Benin. Proper attire is suit regardless of the weather. Business cards are normally exchanged in initial meetings.

Travel Advisory

[Return to top](#)

Please see the State Department's advisory website at http://travel.state.gov/travel/travel_1744.html

Visa Requirements

[Return to top](#)

American visitors require visas to travel to Benin. Visas can be obtained at the appropriate nearest Benin Embassy or Consulate prior to arrival. The Embassy of the Republic of Benin in the United States of America is located at 2124 Kalorama Road, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008, telephone (202) 232-6656. www.beninembassy.us; email: info@beninembassyus.org

U.S. Companies that require travel of foreign businesspersons to the United States should be advised that security evaluations are handled via an interagency process. Visa applicants should go to the following links.

State Department Visa Website: <http://travel.state.gov/visa/>

Telecommunications

[Return to top](#)

There is only one landline telephone provider in Benin, the parastatal Benin Telecoms S.A. Potential subscribers to this service will be required to send their completed request for a landline connection to this company with relevant supporting documents including copies of identity cards, resident permit, and property tax receipts or copies of the lease agreement.

High-speed internet connections are available at cyber cafes and hotels. Residential and office internet service is readily available.

Cellular phone service is well developed and covers most of Benin. There are presently five providers of mobile telephone service; all offer monthly subscription and prepaid services.

Transportation

[Return to top](#)

Transportation options in country include bush taxis or buses for intercity transportation and motorbike taxis or car taxis within Cotonou and most other cities. Chauffeured cars can also be rented in Cotonou.

Language

[Return to top](#)

French is the lingua franca of Benin, which has multiple ethnicities with distinct languages. English is not commonly used.

Health

[Return to top](#)

Visitors should review health precautions recommended for Benin by the Centers for Disease Control: <http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/destinations/benin.htm>. All visitors must have a valid international health certificate (WHO Yellow Card/Carte Jaune De L'OMS) with proof that they have been vaccinated for yellow fever within the past 10 years. New vaccinations must be at least 10 days old to take effect; visitors who are vaccinated less than 10 days prior to arrival in Benin may be denied entry.

Local Time, Business Hours, and Holidays

[Return to top](#)

The official workweek in Benin is Monday through Friday. Most offices close for two to three hours at midday but remain open until 1830 or later. Some private businesses and Banks operate on Saturdays.

National holidays are as follows:

1. January 1 - New Year's Day
2. January 10 - Traditional Religion Day
3. March/April - Easter Holiday
4. March - Maouloud
5. May 1 for Labor
6. May - Ascension Day and Whit Monday
7. August 1 - Benin Independence Day
8. August 15 - Assumption Day
9. October - Ramadan / Eid-El-Fitr Day
10. November 1 - All Saints Day
11. December - Tabaski
12. December 25 - Christmas Day

Temporary Entry of Materials and Personal Belongings

[Return to top](#)

Benin allows the temporary entry of material and personal belongings subject to customs inspection. Customs officers may decide to levy duty on these belongings depending on their use. Please see temporary entry in chapter 5 for more information.

Web Resources

[Return to top](#)

State Department Visa Website: <http://travel.state.gov/visa/index.html>

United States Visas.gov: <http://www.unitedstatesvisas.gov/>

U.S. Embassy Cotonou Visa Unit:
<http://benin.usembassy.gov/informationandservices.html>

Benin's Embassy in the U.S.: www.beninembassy.us

U.S. State Department's Travel Advisory for Benin:
http://travel.state.gov/travel/cis_pa_tw/cis/cis_1066.html

[Return to table of contents](#)

[Return to table of contents](#)

Chapter 9: Contacts, Market Research and Trade Events

- [Contacts](#)
- [Market Research](#)
- [Trade Events](#)

Contacts

[Return to top](#)

- Agence Beninoise de Promotion des Echanges Commerciaux (Benin Agency for Promotion of Trade)

Robert Akinde, Director General
BP 1254, Cotonou, Benin
Tel: +229 21-30-13-20/30-13-97
Fax: +229 21-30-04-36
E-mail: micpe.abepec@otitelecoms.bj
<http://www.abepec.bj>

- Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie du Benin (CCIB)—Benin Chamber of Industry and Commerce

01 BP 31, Cotonou, Benin
Tel: +229 21-31-20-81/31-43-86
Fax: +229 21-31-32-99
E-mail: info.ccib@ccibenin.org
<http://www.ccibenin.org>

- Direction de l'Alimentation et de la Nutrition Appliquée (Food Safety Control Office). This office is under the Ministry of Agriculture and can be contacted via:

Aexis Maleté
Director of DANA
BP 295, Porto Novo, Benin
Tel. +229 20-21-26-70
Fax. +229 20-21-39-63
E-mail: yombomalete@yahoo.fr

- Direction des Pharmacies (Pharmaceutical Products Control Office). This office is under the Benin Ministry of Health and can be reached via:

Ministère de la Santé
Cotonou, Benin
Tel : +229 21-33-21-78
Fax: + 229 21-33-04-64

- Fiduciaire Conseil & Assistance (Business Counselling and Chartered Accountancy

BP 652, Cotonou, Benin
Tel:+229 21-31-82-30
Fax: +229 21-3182-34
Email: fca@intnet.bj
Website: www.fcjaf.com (Under construction)

- U.S. Embassy Commercial Service
Tel. +229 21-30-06-50
Fax. +229 21 30-06-70
Email: Benincommercial@state.gov
Website: <http://cotonou.usembassy.gov/>

Market Research

[Return to top](#)

To view market research reports produced by the U.S. Commercial Service please go to the following website: <http://www.export.gov/mrktresearch/index.asp> and click on Country and Industry Market Reports.

Please note that these reports are only available to U.S. citizens and U.S. companies. Registration to the site is required, and is free.

Trade Events

[Return to top](#)

Please click on the link below for information on upcoming trade events.
<http://www.export.gov/tradeevents/index.asp>

[Return to table of contents](#)

[Return to table of contents](#)

Chapter 10: Guide to Our Services

The President's National Export Initiative aims to double exports over five years by marshaling Federal agencies to **prepare U.S. companies to export successfully, connect them with trade opportunities and support them once they do have exporting opportunities.**

The U.S. Commercial Service offers customized solutions to help U.S. exporters, particularly small and medium sized businesses, successfully expand exports to new markets. Our global network of trade specialists will work one-on-one with you through every step of the exporting process, helping you to:

- Target the best markets with our world-class research
- Promote your products and services to qualified buyers
- Meet the best distributors and agents for your products and services
- Overcome potential challenges or trade barriers
- Gain access to the full range of U.S. government trade promotion agencies and their services, including export training and potential trade financing sources

To learn more about the Federal Government's trade promotion resources for new and experienced exporters, please click on the following link: www.export.gov

For more information on the services the U.S. Commercial Service offers to U.S. exporters, please click on the following link: (Insert link to Products and Services section of local buyusa.gov website here.)

U.S. exporters seeking general export information/assistance or country-specific commercial information can also contact the **U.S. Department of Commerce's Trade Information Center** at **(800) USA-TRAD(E)**.

To the best of our knowledge, the information contained in this report is accurate as of the date published. However, **The Department of Commerce** does not take responsibility for actions readers may take based on the information contained herein. Readers should always conduct their own due diligence before entering into business ventures or other commercial arrangements. **The Department of Commerce** can assist companies in these endeavors.

[Return to table of contents](#)