

ECOWAS GIVES CEMENCO GREENLIGHT TO EXPORT ITS PRODUCT

The Liberia Cement Corporation and its product were approved under the ECOWAS trade Liberalization Scheme (ETLS) on 15th September 2021. The ETLS came into existence first in 1979 but expanded in 1990 to also include industrial goods. The ETLS guarantees free movement of goods between member countries. There are 15 ECOWAS member countries including Liberia. With this approval, The Liberia Cement Corporation-CEMENCO is now qualified to export its product to any of the other member states after obtaining a Certificate of Origin except for group internal policy-limiting sister companies from competing with one another.

Why is this a landmark for the Liberia Cement Corporation?

The Liberia Cement Corporation was established in Liberia on 19 April 1966 under the then secretary of state or minister of foreign affairs as is called today Mr. J. Rudolph Grimes. Since 1966, CEMENCO's operations have never ceased except for interruption during the civil war in Liberia. For all these years, CEMENCO continue to supply the local market with its own local production and at times with importations. The importation of bagged cement became of a necessity in the 2000s when the obsolete (1966) mill could not meet up with the demand of the market. The mill was so obsolete that it could only produce one type of cement-the 32.5. What was most noticeable, was the constant break down of the mill. With no or limited spare parts to be sourced around the world, the local engineers resorted to the fabrication of parts.

With the importation of bagged cement introduced by CEMENCO, others became interested. So, around 2011 to 2013, there were now few importers of bagged cement on the local market. This cumulated into the establishment of another cement plant in Liberia today. As of the writing of this paper, the new plant may be commissioned in the shortest distance future.

Nevertheless, in 2012, the shareholders of CEMENCO decided to invest in a modern state of the art mill, one of the 21 centuries. In 2013, that investment was actualized with the commissioning of the mill that is in operation today with greater and diversified grinding capabilities. With this historicity, you may now appreciate why we term the approval of CEMENCO and its product a landmark.

For over 55 years of CEMENCO existence in Liberia, the focus was primarily on the local market. All was done either to produce or import to supply the local market and never in a single dream did anyone think that CEMENCO would ever think of exporting to countries. Now comes 2021 when CEMENCO under the able leadership of its managing director, Mr. William P. Gaignard took the bold step to apply to ECOWAS for a permit to export to any of its member countries. On 15th September 2021, ECOWAS gave CEMENCO that green light to export locally manufactured cement-what a great landmark.