



CALL FOR PAPERS

WCP Virtual International Conference

MSMEs and COVID-19: Impacts, Challenges and Opportunities.

Special Theme: COVID-19 and the Sustainability of Blue Entrepreneurship

8-9 December 2021

Organized by the WTO Chairs Programmes (WCP) at the University of Mauritius (UoM)

Background:

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impacts on the livelihood of each and everyone. Particularly, the MSMEs have been affected by the various measures and policies implemented by governments worldwide. Lockdowns, confinement, travel restrictions, vaccination requirements have all changed the daily routine of entrepreneurs. Being a category that remains highly vulnerable to shocks, MSMEs have been definitely, and sometimes irreversibly, affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The WTO Chairs programmes (WCP) at the University of Mauritius (UoM) is organising a Virtual International Conference on '**MSMEs and COVID-19: Impacts, Challenges and Opportunities**', with a Special Theme: *COVID-19 and the Sustainability of Blue Entrepreneurship*. This virtual conference aims at specifically convening research and discussion focussing on the impacts of the pandemic on MSMEs and providing a forum to academics, policy makers, civil societies, business partners and experts working on issues relating to the impact of COVID-19 on Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMES), new challenges that the pandemic has imposed on them and the recovery measures adopted to circumvent the effects of the pandemic. A special focus will be put on those involved in the blue entrepreneurship sector and on small island developing states, which often remain largely dependent on their blue economy and sustainable ocean stewardship. Small island states, relative to their land mass, have vast ocean resources at their disposal which present a huge opportunity for boosting their economic growth and to tackle unemployment, food security and poverty. The blue economy is thus the sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and social equity, alleviation of poverty, creation of jobs, as well as the preservation of the ocean ecosystem. It provides for an inclusive model in which coastal states can begin to extend the benefit of those resources to all by promoting the inclusion and participation of all affected social groups and sectors.

The conference invites conceptual, empirical research presentations, and country context case studies along the conference theme as well as other related issues from all over the globe. Delegates are invited to present completed research papers and/or work in progress. Submissions and presentations must address both the theoretical and practical implications of the findings. Parallel tracks of refereed presentations will enable authors to obtain constructive feedback on their study. Furthermore, the organisers are hoping to hold a round table, revolving around the conference theme and regrouping academics, stakeholders and policymakers.

The topics considered may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- COVID-19 in Small Island Developing Countries
- COVID-19 and MSMEs: Impacts, Challenges, Opportunities and Recovery Measures.
- COVID-19 Employment and Productivity Effects on MSMEs
- COVID-19: SMEs Investment, Innovation and Market Diversification Strategies
- MSMEs building resilience through trade during COVID-19
- Assessing the socio-economic effects of COVID-19 and health measures on the blue economy.
- COVID-19 and new opportunities for MSMEs in the blue economy
- Government policies and the integration of MSMEs in the sustainable blue recovery.
- COVID-19 and blue entrepreneurship
- Sustaining blue entrepreneurship in the COVID-19 era
- Competition Law and Policy for MSMEs in the COVID-19 period
- COVID-19 and MSMEs: The opportunities, challenges and relevance of digital trade
- Electronic commerce for MSMEs in the COVID-19 era
- The regulatory responses to COVID-19 and their impacts on MSMEs
- Regulating the digital economy in the COVID-19 era
- Access to finance in the COVID-19 period

Guidelines:

The organizing committee invites both extended abstract (600-700 words) and full paper submissions (5000-6000 words) from researchers and practitioners in the field of business, law, economics, statistics and other social sciences. All abstracts and full papers should be formatted accordingly to facilitate the review process. Author's names and details, including names of all co-authors plus affiliations and addresses for general correspondence (including email address) of each author, and a brief personal profile (maximum 100 words) of the presenter, should appear on a separate cover page. In submitting an abstract, at least one author undertakes to attend the virtual international conference if the extended abstract/final paper is accepted. In addition, one author should not have more than two submissions, either as a single author or as a co-author.

All submissions should be forwarded via email (as a word.doc attachment) to b.seetannah@uom.ac.mu, v.tandrayen@uom.ac.mu and y.mooneeram@uom.ac.mu, with subject line as '**Virtual Conference: MSMEs and COVID-19: Impacts, Challenges and Opportunities**'. Researchers are encouraged to register upon acceptance of their extended abstract/full paper. Authors of accepted extended abstracts/full papers, subject to a blind review, will need to submit the final revised version by 22nd November 2021 for inclusion in the conference refereed proceedings.

Important Dates and Deadlines

Deadlines

Submission of extended abstracts/full papers: *30 October 2021*

Notification of review/acceptance: *15 November 2021*

Revised extended abstracts/final papers for inclusion in the refereed proceedings: *22 Nov 2021*

Registration: *30 November 2021*

Conference Dates: *8-9 December 2021*

Registration is FREE, the conference is sponsored by the WTO Chair Programme

Conference Chairs and Organising Committee

Co Chairs: *Boopen Seetannah, Varsha Mooneeram-Chadee and Verena Tandrayen-Ragoobur*

Scientific Committee:

Prof N. Ngepah (University of Johannesburg); Prof J De Melo (Emeritus Professor FERDI, University of Geneva); Dr S. Moncada (University of Malta); Dr P. Ongono (University of Yaounde II, Cameroon); Prof M Sarma (Jawaharlal Nehru University); Prof S. Dijoux-Rolfingh (University Paris-Nanterre); Prof J. Colom (HDR of Universite de la Reunion); Prof Marie-Annick Lamy (Universite de la Reunion); Dr K Padachi (University of Technology Mauritius); Dr V Teeroovengadum (University of Mauritius), Prof R V Sannasee (SADC), Prof W Viviers (North-West University), Prof T Soobaroyen (University of Essex), Dr S Fauzel (University of Mauritius), Dr V Ramiah (University of Wollongong), Dr R Bhattu-Babajee (University of Mauritius), K Kamoche (Uni of Nottingham Business School), E. Ganne (WTO), K. Lundquist (WTO), Prof W Zdouc (WTO), H Alfred (North West University), B Bolaky, (UNECA), A. Diallo (ITC), Dr N Oulmane (UNECA) and Dr M Smeets (St Petersburg State University/ SUIBE).

About WTO Chairs Programme

The WTO Chairs Programme (WCP) seeks to enhance knowledge and understanding of the trading system among academics, citizens and policy makers in developing countries by stimulating teaching, research and public debate on international trade and trade cooperation at the level of tertiary education and research institutions. The WTO provides financial support to academic institutions, and facilitates continuous interaction between institutions, ministries, civil society, private sector, students and academics. It also supports academic institutions and associated individual scholars from developing countries in the following areas: course preparation, teaching, research and information dissemination. The ultimate objective of the WTO Chairs Programme is to strengthen the human and institutional capacities of universities from developing countries to support governments in the formulation of sound trade policies. One of the main objectives of WCP is to promote research focused on extending specialized knowledge and explaining the policy relevance of existing research.