

Text N°2: Could Football Become Big Business in Africa?

Football is undoubtedly Africa's most popular sport. Millions tune in every week to watch the stars of the world's biggest clubs compete. It is difficult to find an office, restaurant or bar on the continent that is not broadcasting some sort of football game any given time. Around 20million African viewers watched the UEFA Champions League final in May 2015.

- 5 Yet Africa's national leagues are far behind those of Europe in terms of development. From television rights and merchandise to sponsorship, there are many opportunities for what could become a billion-dollar sport for Africa. Prospects for this growing industry are on the up after a successful 2010 FIFA World Cup held in South Africa and the more recent eight-year sponsorship deal between oil and gas company Total and the Confederation of African Football
- 10 (CAF). If the football industry can overcome poor governance issues, stem the migration of talented players and reignite interest in domestic leagues, the sport can play a significant role in driving Africa's economic and social development.

There is no lack of footballing talent from the continent. From Liberia's Georges Weah, to Côte d'Ivoire's Didier Drogba and Gabon's Pierre-Emerick Obameyang-to name just a few-African

15 footballers have been lighting up the global stage for decades. Yet the migration of gifted African footballers to Europe is hampering interest and development in Africa's leagues. "Muscle Drain" where top players leave Africa for more developed leagues –has been long discussed, with BBC News running an article as far back as 2000 entitled "Is Europe stealing Africa's best players?", but little progress has been made in combatting the problem.

- 20 African footballers that have a major presence in European leagues, with the 2010 Demographic study of footballers in Europe finding that 571 players from Africa were employed by 528 clubs of 36 top division leagues of UEFA member countries, an average of more than one per club. Top-level clubs and agents are constantly on the lookout for skilled young African footballers that have the potential to become world-class stars.

- 25 Up-and-coming African players are more likely to stay on the continent if there are opportunities for them and the support system required to enhance their skills is strong; but until FIFA introduces more stringent regulations on the selling of young players not much can be expected to change. Issue around corruption and the political interference in football exist everywhere. "Football in Africa has faced numerous challenges in recent years and has faced
- 30 various allegations of corruption and abuses of power within its governance structures, as well as cases of match-fixing and illegal trafficking of players being reported across the continent", says Jake Marsh, a senior sport integrity manager at the International Center for Sport Security (ICSS). These problems are not only damaging to the perception of the game, but they can have a real impact on the success of players on the field.