



SHAPING THE IP LANDSCAPE IN AFRICA

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2024 IP FILING TRENDS: KEY INSIGHTS FROM TOP APPLICANTS



2024 IP FILING TRENDS: KEY INSIGHTS FROM ARIPO'S TOP APPLICANTS

The African Regional Intellectual Property Organization (ARIPO) remains a vital hub for intellectual property (IP) protection in Africa. In 2024, the Organization recorded a diverse range of sector engagement, international participation, and regional entrepreneurial activity in IP filings.

This article analyses the top applicants who used the ARIPO IP system across four key categories: patents, trademarks, industrial designs, and utility models. It also examines the top innovation areas, the top countries globally, and the top ARIPO Member States.





2024 IP FILING TRENDS: KEY INSIGHTS FROM ARIPO'S TOP APPLICANTS

1

Patents: Pharma & Tech Lead

Pharmaceutical companies like Eli Lilly, Gilead Sciences, Amgen, and AstraZeneca dominated filings, focusing on pharmaceuticals, organic fine chemistry, and biotechnology. Technology innovators such as Nokia Technologies, Casale SA, and Rosenergoatom highlight growth in digital infrastructure and environmental technology across Africa.



2

Top Global Patent Filers

The United States leads ARIPO patent applications, followed by the United Kingdom, South Africa, India, Finland, China, Germany, Switzerland, Russia, and Australia, reflecting a diverse global interest in African innovation markets.



3

ARIPO Member State Patent Leaders

Mauritius topped patent filings among ARIPO Member States, with Zimbabwe, Namibia, Uganda, and Mozambique rounding out the top five, indicating growing regional engagement in patent-based innovation.



4

Trademarks: Regional & Global Brands

Zambian firms like Bigtree Beverages, Nyama Soya, and Yoyo Foods led filings in non-alcoholic beverages and processed foods. Global players such as Roche Diagnostics and MTN Group secured trademarks across pharmaceuticals, technology, and services.





2024 IP FILING TRENDS: KEY INSIGHTS FROM ARIPO'S TOP APPLICANTS

5

Top Global Trademark Filers

Zimbabwe leads ARIPO trademark applications, followed by South Africa, China, Zambia, the United States, United Arab Emirates, Mauritius, India, Germany, and Tanzania, highlighting strong regional and international brand protection efforts.



6

Industrial Designs & Innovation

China and South Africa tied for industrial design filings, with notable contributions from Germany, India, Tanzania, the United States, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Netherlands, and Japan. Key areas include product packaging, automotive designs, and user interface innovations.



7

Utility Models & Key Takeaways

Zimbabwe and Kenya lead utility model filings, showcasing incremental grassroots innovation. Key takeaways: Pharmaceuticals and biotechnology drive patent filings. Regional brands and foreign investment shape trademark activity. Design protection emphasizes aesthetics and user experience. Utility models highlight context-specific innovation.



PATENTS

Global Pharmaceutical Giants and Tech Innovators Lead the Way

Dominance of Pharmaceuticals and Biotechnology

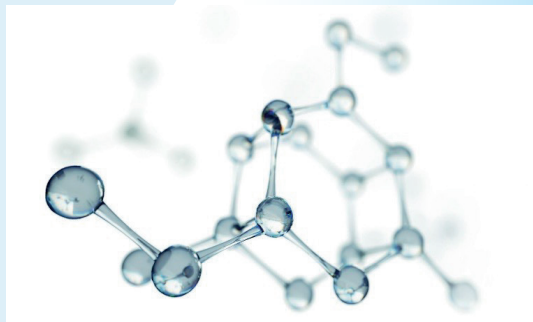
Pharmaceutical companies were the most active patent filers, with Eli Lilly and Company (USA) leading, primarily in pharmaceuticals, organic fine chemistry, and biotechnology. This suggests ongoing efforts to protect drug innovations in the African market, likely driven by public health initiatives and the emergence of new markets in the region. Other major pharmaceutical players included:

- Gilead Sciences, Inc.
- Amgen Inc.
- AstraZeneca AB

The increase in biotech and health-related filings underscores Africa's growing importance as both a market and a source of clinical research opportunities.

Technology and Engineering Contributions

Nokia Technologies OY (Finland) applications focused on digital communication and telecommunications, which highlights the increasing development of digital infrastructure across Africa. Casale SA (Switzerland) and Rosenergoatom (Russia) also stood out with their filings in chemical engineering, metallurgy, and environmental technology, suggesting a cross-border interest in industrial and energy sectors.



PATENTS

Top Filing Countries Worldwide

The United States led the charge in patent applications, a clear indication of its sustained interest in protecting technological innovations across African markets. The top 10 countries in patent filings were:

U.S. DOMINATES

Strong interest in African technological innovations protects ideas.

TOP FILING COUNTRIES

Zimbabwe leads in Trademark filings followed by South Africa and China.



RANKINGS

1. United States
2. United Kingdom
3. South Africa
4. India
5. Finland
6. China
7. Germany
8. Switzerland
9. Russia
10. Australia

EMERGING ECONOMIES

India and China expanding in Africa's ecosystem.

These figures represent a diverse range of global players, with emerging economies such as India and China continuing to expand their presence in Africa's innovation ecosystem.

Filing from ARIPO Member States: Mauritius Leads in Innovation

Among ARIPO's 22 Member States, Mauritius emerged as the top filer of patent applications in 2024. Zimbabwe followed closely, while Namibia took the third spot. Uganda and Mozambique each contributed, demonstrating early but promising engagement in patent-based innovation.



MAURITIUS TOP PERFORMER

Mauritius ranked first among ARIPO Member States for patents.



ZIMBABWE SECOND

Follows Mauritius with increasing patent filings this year.



NAMIBIA THIRD

Continues to grow in patent applications significantly.

EMERGING ECONOMIES

Uganda and Mozambique show potential in innovation.

TRADEMARKS

Regional Brands Thrive Amid Global Competition

In 2024, multinational and regional firms continued leveraging ARIPO's centralised trademark filing system to secure protection across multiple jurisdictions. This has resulted in strong engagement from African companies, particularly in the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) and digital sectors.

Zambian Firms Showing Strong Momentum

Bigtree Beverages Limited (Zambia) led all trademark applicants, primarily in Class 32, which covers non-alcoholic beverages and beer. This underscores the region's growing investment in brand development and market presence.

Other influential Zambian companies include: **Nyama Soya Limited** – active in trademarks related to food products **Yoyo Foods Limited** – engaged in filings for processed foods

These filings demonstrate a rising trend of regional players actively protecting their brands within ARIPO member states.

Global Players Showcasing Diverse Trademark Classes

International firms also maintained a strong presence:

- **Roche Diagnostics GMBH** (Germany) filed trademarks spanning Classes 5, 9, and 10, covering pharmaceuticals, scientific instruments, and medical devices.
- **MTN Group** (South Africa) submitted filings across Classes 9, 38, 41, and 42, encompassing technology, broadcasting, education, and software services.

The wide range of Nice Classes among applicants illustrates the increasing diversity of brand protection needs, particularly in healthcare, telecommunications, logistics, and hospitality.

Strong Regional Representation

Regional economies were well represented in 2024's trademark filings, with Zimbabwe leading, followed by South Africa and

China. This strong performance by African states underscores the growing local awareness of intellectual property rights as a crucial foundation for business growth and economic development.

Other active contributors included Tanzania, Namibia, Kenya, Botswana, Uganda, Mozambique, and Liberia, each playing a significant role in advancing brand protection and fostering innovation-driven economies.

STRONG REGIONAL REPRESENTATION

TOP FILING COUNTRIES

The table below ranks the top 10 countries by volume of trademark filings through ARIPO.

RANKINGS



1. Zimbabwe
2. South Africa
3. China
4. Zambia
5. United States
6. United Arab Emirates
7. Mauritius
8. India
9. Germany
10. Tanzania

TRADEMARK DISTRIBUTION OF FILINGS

Zimbabwe leads in Trademark filings followed by South Africa and China.

ZIMBABWE DOMINATES

Trademark filings

TOP FILING COUNTRIES

Zimbabwe leads in Trademark filings followed by Zambia and Mauritius.

RANKINGS



1. Zimbabwe
2. Zambia
3. Mauritius
4. Tanzania
5. Namibia
6. Kenya
7. Botswana
8. Uganda
9. Mozambique
10. Liberia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Su-dan

EMERGING ECONOMIES

India and China expanding in Africa's ecosystem.

Trademark Filings from ARIPO Member States

Among ARIPO Member States, Zimbabwe continued to lead in trademark filings, far surpassing those of other countries. Zambia and Mauritius ranked second and third, respectively.

INDUSTRIAL DESIGN

A China–South Africa Tie

The design category saw a three-way regional and international balance, with China and South Africa tied for the lead.

A CHINA–SOUTH AFRICA TIE

This category saw a three-way regional and international balance.

RANKINGS



1. China
1. South Africa,
3. Germany
4. India
4. Tanzania
4. United States
4. Zambia
4. Zimbabwe
9. Netherlands
10. Japan

THE BALANCED DISTRIBUTION IN DESIGN FILINGS

Reflects a blend of international investment and regional creative output in fashion, manufacturing, and product design sectors.

The balanced distribution in design filings reflects a blend of international investment and regional creative output in fashion, manufacturing, and product design sectors.

Bottles, Interfaces, and Automobiles Stand Out

There has been significant interest in design protection, particularly in the areas of consumer products, automotive innovation, and user interface design.

Beiersdorf AG from Germany was the top design filer, submitting applications related to packaging (specifically cosmetic bottles) and graphic design. This highlights the increasing importance of product appearance and user experience in consumer goods.

Key filings included:

- **Chery Automobile Co., Ltd. (China)** contributed notable automotive design applications, reflecting innovation in vehicle aesthetics and functionality.
- **Koninklijke Philips N.V. (Netherlands)** filed designs for graphical user interface (GUI) animations in medical technology, showcasing the growing role of digital UX in health-related equipment.
- **Acacia Food and Beverages (Zambia)** engaged in packaging bottle designs, illustrating

local industry's attention to branding and consumer connection through packaging.

The design category has showcased both local and international companies that prioritize visual identity, product functionality, and brand distinction in competitive markets. This trend emphasizes both aesthetic and functional design as key assets for product differentiation and market success.

Grassroots Innovation with a Focus on Local Needs

While utility model filings were fewer, they provide insight into grassroots innovation, especially in public health, mechanical engineering, and computing.

Key highlights include:

- **John Hemming Trading Ltd (UK)** contributed pharmaceutical utility model applications, emphasizing pragmatic solutions supporting public health

Great Zimbabwe University and its partners have developed mechanical engineering machinery tailored to region-specific needs, strengthening local manufacturing capabilities.

- **Brian Turyabagye and colleagues (Uganda)** designed practical medical instruments aligned with frugal innovation principles, enhancing rural healthcare delivery.



Innovators from Kenya and Zimbabwe were particularly active, indicating a rich environment for practical, needs-based solutions among ARIPO Member States. This category emphasises ARIPO's role in promoting accessible innovation pathways for individuals, research institutions, and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

UTILITY MODELS

Grassroots Innovation and Emerging Trends

Utility models, often regarded as “petty patents”, are crucial for incremental innovation. Here, Zimbabwe (ZW) topped the list, followed by Kenya (KE).

Although the numbers remain modest, this area represents considerable growth potential,

especially among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and grassroots inventors.

Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Tanzania shared the top spot in 2024. Designs are increasingly being recognised as valuable IP assets for product aesthetics and user appeal. Kenya and Mauritius also performed well, followed by Mozambique and Uganda, indicating the growing interest in creative industries across the continent.

UTILITY MODELS: Zimbabwe Leads the Way

Utility models, often regarded as “petty patents”, are crucial for incremental innovation. Here, Zimbabwe (ZW) topped the list, followed by Kenya (KE).

RANKINGS IN UTILITY MODELS



1. Zimbabwe
2. Kenya
3. United Kingdom
3. Uganda
5. China
5. Spain

RANKINGS IN DESIGNS

1. Zimbabwe
1. Zambia
1. Tanzania
4. Kenya
4. Mauritius
6. Mozambique
7. Uganda

this area represents considerable growth potential, especially among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and grassroots inventors

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UTILITY MODELS

An Expanding IP Ecosystem Rooted in Diversity

The 2024 IP filings at ARIPO indicate a maturing ecosystem that connects global innovation with regional entrepreneurship. Here are the key takeaways:

Pharmaceuticals and biotechnology remain the leading sectors for patent filings, while telecommunications and engineering are emerging as significant growth areas.

- Trademark activity shows strong regional development of brands alongside continued foreign investment.
- Industrial design filings highlight the importance of product appeal and

user experience.

- Utility models emphasize the significance of context-specific innovation, often originating from universities and individuals.

As ARIPO continues to evolve its service delivery and support systems, the 2024 data highlights its central role in promoting inclusive, cross-border IP protection and innovation across Africa.

Furthermore, ARIPO remains committed to assisting creators and innovators in Africa and globally in securing their rights and unlocking value through the power of IP.