



COMMUNIQUÉ: COMESA PARLIAMENTARY POLICY SEMINAR

The Members of Parliament and Permanent Secretaries drawn from the Member States (that are mostly affected by Food Trade Restrictions) and Governments of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) met on 11-12th August 2014 at the Intercontinental Hotel in Lusaka Zambia to:

- (i) REVIEW the Impact of Trade Restrictions specifically the Import and Export bans on food security and trade in a region that is recognized to have a huge food surplus potential;
- (ii) REVIEW and propose alternative (appropriate) food trade policy options that guarantee national food security while enhancing the spirit of regional integration
- (iii) NOTING that the COMESA region has a great food surplus production capacity that needs to be developed by addressing bottlenecks that hinder optimum benefits along the value chain but which are mostly manifested through poor access to markets by value chain actors
- iv) COGNIZANT of the COMESA region's aspiration for a prosperous and integrated economic community
- v) AGREED that optimum agricultural value chain outputs can be greatly increased by unlocking the various policy bottlenecks and the and by enhancing trade policy environment

2. The Parliamentary Policy Seminar:

- i) Reviewed the Synthesis Paper which outlined the alternative Food Trade Policy Options for the COMESA Region;
- iii) Proposed Recommendations and strategies that Member states can take to address food security;

With regard to **Facilitating a more Predictable and Rules- based Environment for Food Trade**, the Parliamentary Seminar recommended that:

- a) The need to form a regional Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture and Food Security drawing representatives from the Agriculture committees of the COMESA Member States' national assemblies to strengthen advocacy for regional agreements on food security and trade

- b) Country level strategic food reserves should be maintained by both public and private sector players
- c) There should be documented regular reports on food balance sheets to secure knowledge of food availability in the region.
- d) There is need for COMESA to facilitate and strengthen farmer associations at the national and regional levels
- e) The need for genuine Public Private Partnership frameworks to enhance food trade
- f) The role for enhanced agricultural financing options including reviewing the roles of such institutions as the PTA Bank in funding farming activities
- g) Strengthen the COMESA Business Council so that it plays a more active role promoting agribusiness
- h) The need to harmonize regional standards to facilitate trade and avoid use of NTBs.
- i) There is need to establish a robust trade information and facilitation system.
- j) Countries should conduct crop estimates surveys and early warning systems and share the data through the COMESA structure

With regard to **Enhancing Food Productivity through Trade**, the Parliamentary Seminar recommended that:

- a) Bans of imports and exports should generally be discouraged as they stifle food productivity and trade expansion. Where this happens, enough notice should be given before bans are imposed. There is also need to consult all relevant stakeholders before bans are imposed. Once bans are enforced, national monitoring committees should always be established to monitor stocks.
- b) Need for diversification into other crops/foods as well as promote food processing for value addition
- c) There is need to encourage country specialization. In this regard, there is need to divide regions according to agro-ecological zones and promote specializations based on comparative advantage
- d) COMESA should domesticate international rules and protocols
- e) Need to lower the cost of production without affecting quality and reducing competitiveness
- f) Define rules on seed production to enable farmers get proper seeds
- g) Develop transport infrastructure to promote intra-regional trade. Complimentary to this, effort should be made to lower the cost of transportation in the region
- h) Develop database on available food (balance sheet) to help in establishing deficit and surplus regions.
- i) Introduce e-wallet and other ICT innovations to support regional trade in food commodities.

- j) There is need to enhance trust and integrity among countries. Arbitration measures under ACTESA should be enforced fully
- k) COMESA position on GMOs seed trade should be upheld. Notwithstanding this, there is need to invest in instruments to enable ventures into GMOs. In this regard, there is need for well-equipped facilities and laboratories. Meanwhile, countries should be allowed to adopt their respective positions on GMOs.
- l) There is need to form a supervisory mechanism (if none exists) to enforce Rules of Origin. In this regard, COMESA States should set up monitoring desks to ensure rules of origin.
- m) Need to strengthen national systems to generate accurate data. In this regard, there is need to establish a desk at ACTESA to generate and disseminate market information. The development of market information systems at the national level should be complimentary to this.
- n) There should be national level bio-safety and bio-technology mechanisms to address the GMO issues. There is also need for more research on GMOs, the establishment of a regional laboratory to check GMOs is recommended. Complimentary to this, there is need to create more awareness about GMOs among the citizens of the COMESA region.

3. The Parliamentary Policy Seminar was attended by the following Members of Parliament, Ministry Representatives and other select stakeholder representatives.

4. The following organizations represented the Private sector and other stakeholders.

Grain Traders Association of Zambia (GTAZ), Grain Traders and Processors Association (GTPA) from Malawi, the Eastern Africa Grain Council, Southern Africa Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU), the Rwanda Grain and Cereals Corporation (RGCC), Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System (ReSAKSS), Indaba Agricultural and Policy Research Institute , FoodTrade, The NEPAD Business Foundation(TNBF), the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), IFAD, Famine and Early Warning Systems Network (FewsNet), Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) among others.

5. In his official remarks, the Minister for Agriculture-Zambia commended COMESA for the initiative saying the government of Zambia was working with all stakeholders in creating a policy environment that would enhance productivity and market access for the benefit of value chain actors

7. The COMESA Assistant Secretary General in charge of Programs Ambassador Kipyego Cheluget, in his welcoming remarks, said COMESA's aspirations were a fully economically integrated region and that addressing trade restriction was one of COMESA's priorities.

8. The Chief Executive Officer of the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) Mr. Argent Chuula also gave opening remarks and thanked the Honorable Members for

honoring the invitation and said that ACTESA was honored to convene the Seminar and said this was part of ACTESA's role in advancing the interests of the Alliance members many of whom are small holder farmers across the region.

9. Executive Director of IAPRI on behalf of the organizers laid out the objectives of the Seminar and commended the Honorable members and government representatives for finding time to attend the important deliberations and reiterated that creating an enabling policy environment required a multistakeholder approach and that the meeting was a Seminar was a great step in that direction.

9. The Seminar was facilitated by Prof. Oliver Saasa of Premier Consult while ACTESA served as the Policy Seminar Rapporteur.

10. The Seminar reviewed the Impact of the Trade Restrictions through the three perspectives presented: The COMESA food security potential, the Price Effects of Trade Restrictions and the Impact of Trade Restrictions on Market Development for staple foods trade.

11. Ambassador Kipyego Cheluget in his closing statement CONGRATULATED the ACTESA for successfully hosting the Policy Seminar and thanked the all Honorable members and government representatives who had taken time to participate and contribute to the Resolutions of the seminar whose recommendations would go a long way in enhancing the trade policy environment for food trade and security.

12. The Policy Seminar ADOPTED its Communiqué as read by the facilitator Prof. Oliver Saasa.

DONE at Lusaka in the Republic of Zambia on 12th August 2014, in the English and French.