

COMESA Authority endorses ACTESA as specialized agency

The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Authority has endorsed the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) as a specialized agency of COMESA as provided in article 182 of the COMESA Treaty.

The Authority endorsed ACTESA as a specialized agency of COMESA to promote the competitiveness and integration of small farmers in national, regional and international markets, during the 13th Summit of the COMESA Authority of Heads of State and Government in Zimbabwe.

The Authority also called for the speedy implementation of the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) at both national and regional levels.

ACTESA was launched on September 24 2008 as a result of the meeting of COMESA Ministers of agriculture held in Seychelles in March 2008, where the COMESA Secretariat was mandated to hasten the preparation and design of ACTESA as a follow up to the 2006 Abuja declaration by the African Union on food security in Africa, to promote development of collaborative partnerships for expanded trade in staple foods.

The main goal of ACTESA is to increase farmer productivity and incomes in the COMESA region through trade in staple

crops.

It is an answer to the region's agricultural challenges that include trade related constraints, low productivity, technological and policy related constraints.

ACTESA further answers to the need to have a programme that combines the market oriented needs of CAADP Pillar II and III, that seek to improve rural infrastructure and trade-related capacities for market access and increase food supply, reduce hunger, and improve responses to food emergency crises respectively.

Consequently, ACTESA is the primary agency for achieving the COMESA vision of increased regional integration and improved competitiveness of staple food markets, leading to broad based growth and decreased food insecurity.

The targeted staple crops under the ACTESA programme include maize, sorghum, rice, beans, pulses, cassava, and bananas. In addition, livestock and livestock products, as well as selected food products produced in marginal agro-ecological zones, will be included.

In line with the directives of the Council of Ministers meeting at the Summit, ACTESA will now enable an MOU with COMESA to cover activities, administrative and financial arrangements.

COMESA holds second AAMP policy seminar/training workshop



Delegates at the policy seminar

COMESA's CAADP in conjunction with the World Bank's African Agriculture Markets Programme (AAMP), held the second training workshop and policy seminar from June 15-19, 2009 in Livingstone, Zambia.

The two activities were held under the theme, 'Getting fertilizers to farmers: How to do it? Who should do it? And why it should be done.'

The policy seminar's objective was to share information on how to develop fertilizer markets and identify policies needed for specific market circumstances, while the training workshop's objective was to provide information and share policy analysis methods on fertilizer markets.

The seminar was officially launched by Zambian Minister of Agriculture Dr. Brian Chituwo, who was represented by the Permanent Secretary, Mr. Bernard Namachila. COMESA Secretary General,

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Mr. Namachila (c), Dr. Mwila (r), Dr. Wanzala (l)

Mr. Sindiso Ngwenya, was represented by Director for Investment Promotion and Private Sector Development (IPPSD), Dr. Chungu Mwila. Permanent Secretaries, Parliamentarians and the private sector from Zambia, Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Malawi, Tanzania and Mozambique attended the meeting.

The participants shared country experiences as regards fertilizer and agreed that it was important to place increasing emphasis on driving down fertilizer costs in a different way, by improving efficiency through scale economies, infrastructure investments, improved credit, transport systems and improved policy transparency.

The participants noted that some of the regional initiatives that COMESA could promote to reduce marketing costs through economies of scale in the fertilizer supply business, included establishment of facilities for finance and warehousing; ensuring competitive private sector involvement; and coordinating public and private investments to lower regional and domestic distribution costs.

They noted that a constructive role for COMESA would be to provide policy support, increase the capacities of the regulatory agencies and distribution chains to ensure affordable prices and expanded choices for producers.

AAMP is meant to enhance regional capacity, policy dialogue, and coordination on agricultural input and output markets. It was launched during the CAADP Partnership Platform meeting on March 19, 2008 in Seychelles.

AAMP directly supports the objectives of CAADP and has the endorsement of all African Union members. It supports the development of two CAADP crosscutting areas: capacity building and strategy formulation, relating to agricultural staple food and input markets.

COMESA CAADP status

COMESA was the first Regional Economic Community (REC) to begin supporting the country roundtable process. The CAADP RT process started in COMESA in May 2006.

Since then, 18 out of 19 member States have appointed CAADP focal points. 13 countries namely, Rwanda, Malawi, Zambia, Kenya, Sudan, Ethiopia, Uganda, Djibouti, Seychelles, Burundi, Swaziland, Madagascar and Comoros have launched the roundtable process, with a compact signed in Rwanda in March 2007, while the Government of Malawi approved its CAADP Compact in April 2009 and awaits signing.

Six Countries namely, Malawi, Zambia, Uganda, Kenya, Djibouti and Burundi have concluded their stock-taking and investment options reports.

Upcoming event: CAADP day

The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme Day (CAADP) Day event is scheduled for Saturday, 27th June 2009 in Tripoli, Libya on the eve of the 13th Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union scheduled from 1st to 3rd July, 2009 in Sirte, Libya.

This Summit is dedicated to agriculture under the theme 'Investing in Agriculture for Economic Growth and Food Security' which was chosen by the AU January-February 2009 Summit.

The CAADP Day will aim to zero in on some of these issues by providing an open platform for genuine public dialogue on lessons and best practices in advancing African agriculture through the CAADP framework.

The CAADP Day will include key-note addresses from African Ministers, exhibitions and a press-moderated discussion. (Source: NEPAD)