

The COMESA Regional Agro-Inputs Programme (COMRAP) has come to an end after 18 months of implementation in the COMESA region.

COMRAP, implemented by ACTESA and funded by the European Commission (EC) to the tune of €20 million responded to the objectives of the EC food facility which are: to encourage food producers to increase supply; to deal directly with the effects of volatile food prices on local populations; and to increase food production capacity.

It was designed to respond to the rising food prices by increasing agricultural productivity through enhanced access to finance, fertilizer and seeds.

The COMRAP intervention revolved around rural finance, weather index insurance, agro-dealer capacity building, seed multiplication and seed regulations and frameworks harmonization. The seed component was also intended to provide support to the 19 COMESA member States through the procurement of seed multiplication and laboratory equipment.

The overall objective of COMRAP was thus to contribute to improving rural food security and livelihoods in the COMESA region through training and capacity building of national and regional input providers.

Since inception COMRAP has achieved the following results in the COMESA region:-

Financial Services

755 people from financial institutions were trained and sensitized out of which 69% were male and 31% female.

Weather Index Insurance

Over 1,700 insurance and bank personnel were trained on weather index insurance, exceeding the target.

Weather was piloted in four countries:

- Malawi
- Uganda
- Rwanda
- Zimbabwe

While the programme was piloted in eight landlocked countries, namely; Burundi, Ethiopia, Malawi, Rwanda, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, the seed component covered all the 19 COMESA member States.

Seed Development

- Seed multiplication- Managed to produce about 25,000 metric tons of seed. Data collection is ongoing
- Seed multiplication and laboratory equipment: procurement under way
- Seed regulation harmonization: in the process of legalizing seed policies that have been developed

Agro-Dealer Development

Seven Thousand Five Hundred and two agro-dealers were trained out of which 5,686 were agro-dealers and 1,816 were agents. Formation of Interim regional/district associations (cooperatives) commenced in Ethiopia, Rwanda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

COMRAP specifically aimed to:

- To reach farmers in each country to improve their sustainable access to agro-inputs and services;
- Train and certify agro-dealers;
- Strengthen the human resource capacity in financial markets to deliver credit to smallholders in a cost effective fashion and promote the adoption of weather indexed insurance as a vehicle for hedging against drought and financial risk;

- Strengthen the capacity for the improvement of seed quality and provide support for enhancing seed supply;
- Harmonise seed trade regulations throughout the COMESA region building on the harmonisation initiatives that have been undertaken by other regional economic communities.