

COMESA launches Online Regional Seed label Verification System



Mr Branttie, who conducted the training, said the seed labels and certificates will promote the use of genuine seed and eventual elimination of fake seed from circulation.

ACTESA is implementing this programme through the COMESA Seed Harmonisation Implementation Plan (COMSHIP). It is a region-wide initiative meant to harmonize trade in certified seed by having one common label and certification system. For every seed package that will have a COMESA sticker, it means the source of that seed has been documented and can be tracked by the receiving end.

Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Amb. Dr Kipyego Cheluget who was represented at the training by the Director of Industry and Agriculture Mr Thierry Kalonji said COMESA will work with National Seed Authorities to ensure that fake seed is eradicated from the market.

COMESA has become the first regional trading bloc to launch an online seed label verification system in Africa and globally. The system will assist the region eliminate cases of fake seed and boost trade in quality and improved certified seed.

The region has also scored another first by introducing COMESA Regional Certificates to be issued by National Seed Authorities and this is also expected to boost seed trade in the 21 countries.

Pedigree Global Strategy Director Mr Selorm Branttie has since commended COMESA for the launch which has been done through the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) Seed programme.

He was speaking at the COMESA Secretariat during the two-day training held on 24th – 25th April 2019 for seed companies on ordering, use and trading using the COMESA Seed labels and Certificates.

“This is the first time that seed certificates

and verification of the seeds will be done electronically, and the farmer will be able to trace the source of the seed and authenticity of the seed without difficulty,” Mr Branttie added.

He emphasized the need to eliminate the trade and use of fake seed saying it has greatly contributed to the poor performance of 80 million small-holder farmers and food insecurity in the COMESA region.



Participants at the two-day training



Eight of the nine interns in the YEP program

COMESA Internship Program Revamped — YEP!

THE COMESA Secretariat has revamped its existing internship program and created the Youth Educational Programme (**YEP! COMESA**) which is an internship programme for Youths aged 18 to 35 from the 21 Member States. The acronym YEP was chosen because it is an eye catching term that is being used by the youth to mean “yes” or “okay”. Therefore the term reflects the youth energy, willingness and determination.

Chief Human Resources and Management Services Officer at COMESA

Secretariat Ms Haifa Elmubashar Mustafa said in a Statement issued in Lusaka that the **YEP! COMESA** program will be governed by the Internship Policy and Procedure to enable complete transparency and accountability.

Furthermore the **YEP! COMESA** can be seen as an outcome of the Internship Policy and Procedure for yielding greater benefits to the interns as well as the organization.

COMESA Countries Exhibit at the AIM Fair in Dubai

Two COMESA countries, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Republic of Seychelles participated at the 2019 Annual Investment Forum (**AIM**) in Dubai showcasing investment projects and opportunities in their countries.

COMESA and the AIM have been working in partnership to promote investment in the COMESA region and in Dubai since 2015.

The AIM is the largest global investment gathering in Dubai for corporate leaders, policy makers, businessmen, regional and international investors, entrepreneurs, leading

academics and experts showcasing up-to-date information, strategies and knowledge on attracting Foreign Direct Investment.

The aim of the gathering is to connect businesses and countries willing to engage in sustainable partnerships with investors. For 2019, the 9th edition of the AIM focused around the impact of digital globalization, how policies can be set in place to encourage an innovative investment atmosphere, the need to create long-term investment opportunities, and how to attract and develop skilled talents from across the world.

The AIM is an initiative of the UAE Ministry of Economy, held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Ruler of Dubai.

The Forum was attended by around 1,400 participants from 140 countries with the theme “**Mapping the Future of FDI: Enriching World Economies through Digital Globalisation**”.



Fiscal Risk Testing Key to Prudent Public Finance Management – CMI

The COMESA Monetary Institute (CMI) has emphasized the importance of fiscal stress testing for financial institutions in the region as it leads to prudent management of public funds.

CMI Director Mr Ibrahim Zeidy states that addressing fiscal risks is therefore the key element of the COMESA Multilateral Fiscal Surveillance Framework.

He was speaking in Nairobi, Kenya during the training on “Fiscal Stress Testing for Central Banks and Ministries of Finance” from 8th to 12th April, 2019.

The training was motivated by the fact that fiscal risks exist in all countries irrespective of income levels, and hence the need to undertake a detailed analysis of these risks for sound fiscal public finances and macroeconomic stability.

Fiscal risks involve the effects of factors outside government control such as excessive exchange rate depreciation,

excessive debt to GDP (Gross Domestic Product) ratio, bailing out loss making public enterprises etc. Such factors cause fiscal outturns to deviate from their initial forecast, creating potential threat to fiscal and debt sustainability.

Fiscal stress test also involves identifying relevant fiscal risk drivers, selecting appropriate methods or model and using that method to calculate the effect of large shocks.

“Fiscal stress test is therefore an important activity that all countries are required to perform for prudent public finance management, in order to understand how public finances would respond to significant economic and/or financial shocks,” Mr Zeidy added. It entails “a what if” exercise which has to be carried out by each country to ensure fiscal sustainability.

Mr. Zeidy pointed out that countries need a more complete understanding of the

potential threats to their fiscal position, in form of fiscal risk test that can help policy makers simulate the effects of shocks to their forecasts and their implications for government solvency, liquidity and financial needs.

The main objectives of the workshop included Identifying specific fiscal risks; Designing stress test scenarios for fiscal stress test; Undertaking fiscal stress testing for individual risk factors; Interpreting the results correctly for effective macroeconomic management; Sharing knowledge and experience on fiscal stress testing in member countries; and enhancing the implementation of the COMESA Multilateral Fiscal Surveillance Framework.

The training was attended by delegates from Central Banks and Ministries of Finance of COMESA Member States namely: Djibouti, Egypt, Kenya, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Zambian Govt holds Sensitization Meeting on the TFTA



Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry, Mrs Kayula Siame

The Zambian government recently held a sensitization meeting with stakeholders on the Copperbelt mainly from the Chambers of Commerce and the private sector on the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA). The meeting was held ahead of Zambia's pending ratification of the TFTA Agreement. The Sensitization was facilitated by the Department of Foreign Trade in the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry.

Speaking at the event, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry, Mrs Kayula Siame, who was represented by Chief Economist, Mr. Paul Mumba said once effected, the TFTA will spur a new web of opportunities in Zambia and beyond.

She said local exporters will be afforded an opportunity to competitively grow their international market and consumers will equally get a broader scope of products.

"I urge the private sector to take advantage of the trade space that Government has created through the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry and the opportunities that the TFTA will bring," Mrs Kayula said.

At the same event, COMESA Director of Trade

and Customs Dr. Francis Mangeni called on the private sector to actively participate in trade deliberations.

"Quite a number of countries have involved the private sector in their negotiation delegations, Zambia must consider doing the same, as it will ease dissemination of information," Dr Mangeni added.

The private sector present in the meeting, raised concern on what Zambia will contribute to the huge market considering the country's current low production and poor quality goods.

They have however supported the idea of ratifying the TFTA cautioning that Government must improve the Manufacturing and Industrial Sectors if Zambia is to be relevant once the TFTA is in force.

The participants were drawn from Chambers of Commerce in the districts of Kitwe, Ndola, Solwezi, Mansa, Kasama and Chinsali. The TFTA brings together three regions of East African Community (EAC), COMESA and the Southern African Development Community (SADC).