

## Restrictions on Cross Border Movement Affecting Seed Supply Chain



Restrictions on cross border movement imposed in response to the Coronavirus pandemic by countries in the region, have adversely affected the supply of seeds which may lead to food insecurity.

Hence, the African Seed Trade Association (AFSTA) and the COMESA Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA), recommends classification of seeds as essential commodities that should be allowed unrestricted movement across the region.

"If the seed movement is not normalized in the next six months, 123 million out of 650 million people in the COMESA region will face starvation," according to COMESA/ACTESA Seed Expert Dr John Mukuka.

Dr Mukuka said a few countries have reported difficulties to move seeds across borders. If this trend continues, there will be inadequate harvests, a situation that will lead to food insecurity, malnutrition and hunger the COMESA and African countries, in the next few months.

"Closing borders or even slowing down the transboundary movement of seeds could create a significant problem in the seed supply chain," Dr Mukuka said noting that regional countries need to ensure access to quality and improved seed for the 80 million small scale farmers in the COMESA region and beyond.

Dr Mukuka observed that no country today could fully supply farmers with quality seed of their choice solely from their own production. Hence, companies produce seed in different countries all over the world including COMESA, to mitigate the risk of crop failures due to adverse weather conditions.

"By finding optimal locations for seed production, timing of harvest, and localized expertise, the seed sector ensures steady supply of seed for farmers everywhere in the region and globally," he said. Dr Mukuka said ACTESA and AFSTA thus appeals to Member States to allow free movements of seed at this time of the year in line with international standard practice of seed trade and

in conformity with COMESA Seed Harmonisation Implementation Plan (COMSHIP).

This includes: facilitating the movement of seed within the region in line with the COMESA Harmonised Seed Trade Regulations; application of phytosanitary measures for seed only for pests, which are not common to all COMESA countries; use the COMESA Regional Seed certificates and labels for all seed meeting the COMESA Seed Standards among others

Since 2010 COMESA/ACTESA has been working with AFSTA on the implementation of COMSHIP. AFSTA has more than 118 Members from 39 countries of which 27 are National Seed Trade Associations (NSTAs) in Africa and 44 associate members worldwide.

ACTESA is a specialized agency of COMESA formed to address staple food production and marketing in the region.

# Uniform Standards on COVID-19 Responses will Minimize Disruptions

A collective response to the COVID-19 by regional member States with uniform standards will minimize the disruptions being experienced in the supply chain for essential goods. Thus, COMESA has called on member States to stand together in bridging the gap between policy intentions and implementation outcomes.

Speaking during the first Extra-Ordinary Meeting of the Trade and Customs Committee of member States on Tuesday last week, Secretary General (SG) of COMESA Ms. Chileshe Kapwepwe noted that the gains achieved in strengthening market integration, investment and structural transformation are under threat, if Member States do not stand together and collectively respond to the crisis.

The meeting was convened by the COMESA Secretariat through videoconference and attended by 80 delegates mainly trade and customs experts from the 21 Member States. Its sole agenda was to consider proposed guidelines for the movement of goods and services across the COMESA region during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The SG said the draft Guidelines have been developed to help consolidate and coordinate efforts to manage the situation and rally Member States to conform to uniform standards to minimize disruptions in the supply chain for essential goods.

"The Guidelines are meant to restore faith in the commitments we have made to cooperate in customs and border management, procedures, and activities through simplifying and harmonizing their trade documents and procedures," the Secretary General told the delegates.

Ms Kapwepwe noted that the situation in the local economies is made worse by the fact that 80% of workers are employed in the informal sector with all segments of value chains from plants, logistics of distribution, having been disrupted.

She cited the adoption of quarantine, social distancing, and restrictions of movement of persons, goods and services in the face of COVID-19 as directly resulting into production cut-downs, loss of jobs, shortage of food and



Secretary General, Chileshe Kapwepwe

other essential supplies.

"These measures require to be accompanied by pro-poor policy interventions to address immediate challenges such as food insecurity, lack of water and sanitation low social protection and lack of social assistance for the vulnerable," she added.

She observed that the implementation of the COMESA Digital Trade Facilitation and other instruments and the liberalization of services remain core to strengthening the stability of the regional economy against current shocks.

The draft Guidelines will be presented to the meeting of the COMESA Intergovernmental Committee before they are adopted by the Council of Ministers in the next two weeks. If adopted, they will open an opportunity for States to work together and institute measures to safeguard regional integration benefits while cushioning traders, businesses and the vulnerable groups.

The SG encouraged Member States with comparative advantage in producing essential products and protective gear for health workers to support the other countries without sufficient capacity. She also urged the governments to put in place a clear strategy on how to cushion the private sector during and after the pandemic as it has equally been hit hard.

## HOW TO WEAR A MEDICAL MASK SAFELY

[who.int/epi-win](http://who.int/epi-win)

### Do's →



Wash your hands before touching the mask



Inspect the mask for tears or holes



Find the top side, where the metal piece or stiff edge is



Ensure the colored-side faces outwards



Place the metal piece or stiff edge over your nose



Cover your mouth, nose, and chin



Adjust the mask to your face without leaving gaps on the sides



Avoid touching the mask



Remove the mask from behind the ears or head



Keep the mask away from you and surfaces while removing it



Discard the mask immediately after use preferably into a closed bin



Wash your hands after discarding the mask

### Don'ts →



Do not Use a ripped or damp mask



Do not wear the mask only over mouth or nose



Do not wear a loose mask



Do not touch the front of the mask



Do not remove the mask to talk to someone or do other things that would require touching the mask



Do not leave your used mask within the reach of others



Do not re-use the mask

Remember that masks alone cannot protect you from COVID-19. Maintain at least 1 metre distance from others and wash your hands frequently and thoroughly, even while wearing a mask.






# Regional Business Community Push for Trade Facilitation Amid COVID-19



File: A timber factory in Zambia

The regional business community, under the umbrella of the COMESA Business Council (CBC) has urged Member States to facilitate the movement of transit essential cargo across the region efficient clearance and reduction of risk of infections at the border posts.

This is one of the recommendations contained in a position statement issued by the CBC. It called for the establishment of a common framework to facilitate movement of essential goods and services along the border corridors in the region, while implementing measures against the Coronavirus (COVID-19). In the statement, the business council called for a clear guideline for testing and quarantining truck drivers across the borders, including risk-based quarantine approach that does not exceed a 24-hour period for providing

tests results. Increased customs coordination and interfaces will ensure swifter processing of goods and services at the border to reduce clearance times.

CBC urged Member States to consider alternative and practical measures for the movement of cargo across the region such as allowing goods to be transported by a limited number of persons and put in place regulations for truck drivers to have limited interactions with people.

The council further recommends for the adoption of strategic efforts and actions that directly address the smooth and timely movement of essential goods and services in the region. A common framework is essential in addressing issues such as classification of essential goods and services by HS Code to

ensure uniformity and Harmonisation across the countries.

With regard to facilitating the movement of transit cargo across the region, the business community proposes the implementation of instant border measures enquiry, reporting and monitoring platform consisting of border management authorities from each Member State to facilitate the speedier resolution of impediments and barriers to the movement of essential goods and services in COMESA.

Cognizant of the role of specific borders and ports in facilitating intra- Africa and intra-regional trade. CBC advised Member States to consider a tripartite and continental approach.

## COMESA Diary

Date	Meeting/Activity	Organized by	Venue
5 May 2020	Continuation of the Extra-Ordinary Meeting of the Trade and Customs Committee	COMESA	Teleconference
12 May 2020	Extra-Ordinary Meeting of the Inter-Governmental Committee	COMESA	Teleconference
14 May 2020	Extra-Ordinary Meeting of the Council of Ministers	COMESA	Teleconference



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