Eighteen COMESA Member countries have successfully launched the regional Seed Harmonisation Implementation Plan (COMSHIP). Five of them are implementing the programme supported by USAID. Three: Libya, Somalia and Tunisia are yet to launch.

Among the countries that have aligned their national seed laws and regulations with the COMESA Seed Trade Harmonization Regulations are: Burundi, Comoros, Djibouti, DR Congo, Egypt, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Southern Africa (ACTESA) came up with COMSHIP to expedite implementation of the harmonized regional seed regulations to enhance seed production, reliability, seed trade including increasing the competitiveness of the seed industry in the Southern and East African Region.

Addressing the delegates at the 3rd COMESA Seed Committee Meeting in Kigali on 6-7 November 2019, COMESA Seed Development Expert, Dr John Mukuka said domestication of the programme will enable farmers to access quality and improved seed which will lead to food security and poverty reduction.

“This region has the potential to record USD$5 billion in seed trade in the next five years compared to the current trade levels of USD$1.4 billion,” Dr Mukuka he said.

Several challenges have however affected the domestication and implementation of the COMSHIP in the region. These include: slow rate in the utilization of the COMESA Seed Labels and Regional Certificates by seed companies and National Seed Authorities; lack of harmonized COMESA Harmonised Seed Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs); and mistrust and inefficiencies arising from lack of adequate and accurate information by key seed sector players has been a factor in slowing down implementation.
Regional Climate Change Resilience Framework Developed

COMESA countries are increasingly experiencing severe effects of climate change that have left in their wake, death and untold devastation in recent times. Mid this year, the region experienced cyclones Idai and Kenneth in Malawi, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, causing more than 1,000 deaths, infrastructure and property damage running into billions of dollars.

Now, COMESA has developed a Regional Resilience Framework to build the capacity of its members to withstand disasters occasioned by adverse effects of climate change. Such disasters include flooding, landslides, droughts, cyclones, disease epidemics, heat waves among others.

Last week in Nairobi, Kenya, 5-6 November 2019, the draft Framework was reviewed and validated by delegates representing 17 of the 21 Member States. Subsequently, it will be presented to the COMESA Policy Organs for adoption.

Explaining the importance of the framework to the delegates, COMESA Climate Change advisor, Dr Mclay Kanyangarara, said it will address the fragmented and haphazard approach to managing risks, shocks and stresses, which have proved to be ineffective as the magnitude of loss and damage continues to escalate.

He observed: “Resources allocated to much needed developmental projects and programmes are diverted to deal with the effects of the disasters thereby trapping many in a vicious cycle of poverty and underdevelopment.”

In validating the framework, the delegates noted that the resilience
Burundi and Norway have appointed their diplomatic representatives to COMESA. Ambassador Pascal Ruhomvuymworo is now the Permanent Representative of Burundi to COMESA while Ambassador Steinar Egil Hagen is the Special Representative of Norway to COMESA.

The two presented their letters of credence to the COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe on November 7, 2019 in Lusaka. She thanked the two countries for being partners in development for a long time.

With Norway, she cited potential areas of cooperation as trade facilitation programmes, small scale cross border trade initiative, the 50 Million African Women Speak Project, climate resilient society and sustainable development.

Other potential areas of cooperation is the COMESA Seed Harmonization Implementation Plan (COMSHIP) co-ordinated by ACTESA which is aimed at developing the COMESA Seed Industry currently at $2 billion to increase to $5 billion in the year 2025. Which is critical for food security and house-hold incomes for resource-poor farmers.

Regarding Burundi, COMESA has been supporting the country through programmes such as the Regional Integration Support Mechanism (RISM) in capacity building the National Bureau of Standards and the Burundi Revenue Authority among others.

Ambassador Ruhomvuymworo said Burundi recognizes the strength and benefits of being united and working together and committed to support the integration Agenda.

“My prayer is that during my term, I can be instrumental in enhancing the good relationship between Burundi and other COMESA Member States and in the success of integration of Burundi in the COMESA community,” he said.

Ambassador Hagen indicated his country’s willingness to continue pursuing areas of cooperation with the COMESA Member States adding that a well-functioning business sector is a vital basis for job creation and economic growth which helps to reduce poverty and build increased state revenues.
The COMESA and East African Community (EAC) Secretariats in partnership with the Government of Rwanda conducted a regional technical consultative workshop in Kigali last week (8-9 Nov 2019) as part of the preparations for the United Nations Climate Change Conference also known as (COP25).

The meeting comes ahead of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN). Secretariats of the two Regional Economic Communities (RECs) are both beneficiaries of the European Union’s ACP's Global Climate Change Alliance Plus (GCCA+) grant. Hence, they agreed to jointly organize a Pre-COP25 technical meeting to come up with position papers for submission to the Africa Group of Negotiators (AGN) to guide negotiations during COP25 sessions.

The Pre-COP provide a platform to develop a regional policy position paper for EAC Partner States and COMESA Member States. The paper will be submitted to the Africa Group of Negotiators (AGN) to guide negotiations during the 25th Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) sessions set for December 2019 in Madrid, Spain.

Both RECs have an observer status to the UNFCCC processes and plan to participate in the forthcoming COP25 sessions to showcase the milestones, achievements and lessons learnt from the implementation of their climate change programmes in the region.

“This consultative meeting is important because it will ensure that the interests of African countries are adequately and fairly reflected in the ongoing climate change negotiations,” COMESA Climate Change Advisor Dr Mclay Kanyangarara said.

The regional consultative meeting brought together negotiators and policy makers including National Climate Change Focal Points for UNFCCC and Ministries responsible for EAC affairs and representatives from COMESA countries.

At the meeting, the importance of African countries engaging effectively in intergovernmental climate change negotiations, decision-making processes and eventual implementation of the decisions taken was critical. The RECs have a critical role to play in supporting solutions to trans-boundary issues related to a changing climate.

During the meeting, issues of regional importance were identified with a clear road map of how to mainstream them into regional programmes and national implementation processes and opportunities for the RECs to deliver on the Paris Agreement.

Most of the EAC and COMESA Member States are fully engaged in the on-going discussions and negotiations to find a lasting and sustainable solution to the challenge of climate change. They have all ratified the Paris Agreement of 2015 and submitted their ambitious Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) given their circumstances.

The combined list of Member States that participated in the negotiations are: Burundi, Comoros, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Eswatini, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Seychelles, Sudan, Zambia and Zimbabwe.
Land is an essential factor of production that is essential for Africa’s development, but its governance continues to be a major concern among many African States. These concerns arise from the continuous demand for land and many competing land uses especially in areas that are endowed with minerals and other valuable natural resources.

The African Union Commission (AUC) is running an advocacy campaign to secure land tenure and improve land governance systems as prerequisites for poverty reduction, sustainable development and maintaining peace and stability on the continent.

It is for this reason, that the AUC in partnership with COMESA Secretariat conducted a regional validation workshop in Lusaka, 3 - 5 November 2019 to review and validate the draft African Union Commission land governance strategy (LGS).

The objectives of the workshop were to get the inputs of various stakeholders and secure their buy-in and ownership of the LGS. In addition, it was aimed at creating widespread awareness on the importance of integrating land governance within the AUC initiatives and to ensure that the draft LGS serves as an authentic reference document for members of staff of the AUC and affiliated institutions.

Once validated, the Strategy will mainstream land governance within the relevant AUC departments. It shall also guide the AUC’s mandate in ensuring that Member States implement commitments in the AU agenda on land and that monitoring mechanisms are put in place to monitor Member States’ compliance to the agenda on land.

Assistant Secretary in Charge of programmes Ambassador Kipyego Cheluget officially opened the meeting.
COMESA DIARY

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