

**PRESS RELEASE**

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**COMESA Business Council Looks to Promote Efficient and Sustainable Local Supply Chain Systems through Local Sourcing for Partnerships Training Workshop**

**Lusaka Zambia, Monday 8th September 2020:** *“COMESA’s intra-regional trade remains low, at less than 7%. It is only in building the capacity of SMEs, whilst integrating them into supply chains of larger industries in at national and regional levels, that we can meaningfully develop our industries and improve regional trade,”* saidMs. Sandra Uwera, Chief Executive Officer of the [COMESA Business Council](http://comesabusinesscouncil.org/), speaking ahead of the workshop. She noted that there is need to build enterprises’ capacity to meet the demands of today’s urban African consumers. Ms. Uwera also highlighted that the low rates of local sourcing in the region indicate the need to structure mechanisms that can encourage consumption of home-grown products within Zambia and COMESA.

The COMESA Business Council (CBC) in partnership with Zambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Zambia National Farmers Union, Zambia Bureau of Standards and the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry is convening the Local Sourcing for Partnerships virtual training workshop over the next two days, 9th and 10th September, 2020. The training is being held under the theme, “*Promoting Efficient and Sustainable Local Supply Chain Systems*”.

CBC has been implementing the Local Sourcing for Partnerships (LSP) project with a focus on promoting inclusiveness of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) within firm and sectoral level value chains in Africa. Similar trainings have already been conducted in 11 COMESA countries over the past four years. The focus is on strengthening and building the management, governance and business operations of SMEs through standards and quality compliance, for overall enhanced competitiveness. Firstly, this is achieved through training on food safety management systems, and secondly, through training on business processes, governance and compliance. The project will also support and facilitate the integration of SMEs into the competitive supply chain networks of corporations and other key regional value chains. The goal is to encourage inclusivity, growth and sustainability of SMEs, thereby reinforcing intra-regional trade within COMESA.

Companies often source outside Zambia due to various reasons, which primarily have to do with the local market not meeting the prescribed requirements of time, cost, quality and consistency in supply. The challenge of limited and credible information of local distributers and suppliers further affects partnership confidence between the two parties.

The LSP training will address these core challenges and existing assumptions that locally sourced partnerships are difficult and unstable. The training will target an average of 50 SMEs drawn from various sectors, including, horticulture, meat, dairy and other agro-food industries.

The expected outcome following the training on Hazard Analysis and Critical Points (HACCP), and Global Food Safety Initiative (GFSI) management systems, is that the SMEs will establish lasting partnerships with buyers within Zambia, thereby enhancing their market access, having met the latter’s requirements.

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**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

**About the COMESA Business Council (CBC)**

The CBC is the recognized apex business member organization in the region, and a private sector institution of COMESA. The CBC represents private sector interests at the highest levels of decision making in the region. The CBC provides key market driven services to its membership, namely- business advocacy, business support services- linkages, partnerships and market intelligence, and lastly membership development – technical and productive capacity building.

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