

Studies to Address Impediments to Small Cross Border Trade Complete



File: small scale cross border traders at Kasumbalesa

COMESA has conducted two studies to address bottlenecks that impede small scale trade flows within the region. The first study aims at determining the best approach towards smooth implementation of the Simplified Trade Regime (STR). The second relates to the sustainability of trade information desks currently established at border points.

The studies were inspired by the need to increase formal small-scale cross-border trade, to enhance revenue collection for governments at the borders, generate higher incomes for small-scale cross-border traders and increase security, among others.

The STR was developed by COMESA and implementation started in 2010 and has

since then been adopted in other regions. Under the regime, small scale cross border traders have ease of access across borders if their goods fall within the Common List of products agreed upon between neighbouring States.

While COMESA has adopted the bilateral (between Member States) form of

“As we move forward let us all endeavor to make the STR work for our region rather than being seen as a source of discontent and barrier to cross-border trade.”

Common Lists for the STR, the East African Community has adopted the regional approach. Given the overlapping membership to the regional blocs, it has become imperative to determine which of the two approaches works best.

Through two consultancies supported under the 11th European Development Fund: Cross Border Trade Initiative Project, a technical paper on bilateral vs regional Common List for the STR has been developed. This paper, together with the one on sustainability of the trade information desk officers (TIDOs) was presented to Member States on 24 February 2022 for validation.

By formalising cross-border transactions, STR enables small scale cross border

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Blue Economy Statistical System Account Developed



Participants in the validation workshop in Nairobi

The COMESA region is set to benefit from the development of the Blue Economy Fisheries Satellite Account meant to help the region get appropriate data on marine fisheries and promote efficient use of fisheries resources.

Working with ECOFISH, a programme funded under the European Development Fund (EDF11) Cross Regional envelope, several Regional Economic Communities (RECs) have partnered to bring fisheries economic data closer to reality.

Among other issues, ECOFISH focuses on development of the blue economy fisheries satellite account (BEFSA) which aims at measuring the blue economy's contribution to the national output. COMESA is the lead institution on this component and work has been ongoing on development of a framework. To this effect, a regional workshop was convened in Nairobi, Kenya 22 – 23rd February 2022 to validate the draft framework of the Blue Economy Fisheries Satellite Account for Eastern Africa-Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean region.

Speaking at the opening of the event, Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe stated that under-achievement of the blue economy in COMESA and internationally has spurred a lot of work around development of frameworks that include this sector in narratives of sustainable development.

COMESA Member States on their part have recognised that regional integration without a deliberate targeting of interventions on the blue economy will not yield an all-inclusive developmental result.

"In COMESA as in the rest of Africa, information with regards to blue economy is scarce. For instance, to this day almost all fish captured is mostly subsistence and traditional artisanal and it remains without specific and socio-economic information to enable its sustainable management," she said in a statement presented by the Head of Statistics at COMESA Secretariat, Mr Themba Munalula.

For that reason, under the productive integration pillar of the COMESA Medium Term Strategic Plan 2021 – 2025, catalyzing inclusive sustainable transformation of the blue economy is one of the key objectives.

COMESA will lead the statistical system initiative for the region, in partnership with the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), Lake Tanganyika Authority (LTA), Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization (LVFO), East African Community (EAC), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Indian Ocean Tuna Commission (IOTC), Southern African Development Community (SADC) as well as the Southwest Indian Ocean Fisheries Commission (SWIOFC).

Studies to Address Impediments...

traders to benefit from the tariff preferences available under regional integration. It makes it easier to collect information and data and ultimately improve domestic and regional policy making on trade and trade-related activities in the region.

The implementation of the STR is usually accompanied by the deployment of the TIDOs. They serve as clearing agents for the traders; providing information on border procedures and assisting them to fill the forms needed to clear goods. Given that their remuneration and tools comes from resources provided by cooperating partners, it is crucial that options for the sustainability of TIDOs after closure of the programme are identified, hence the study.

The findings of the study on Common Lists for the STR will therefore provide insights as to which of the two approaches yields better results. The recommendations of the study on TIDOs sustainability will help identify options of how to keep the staff in post when the programme expires.

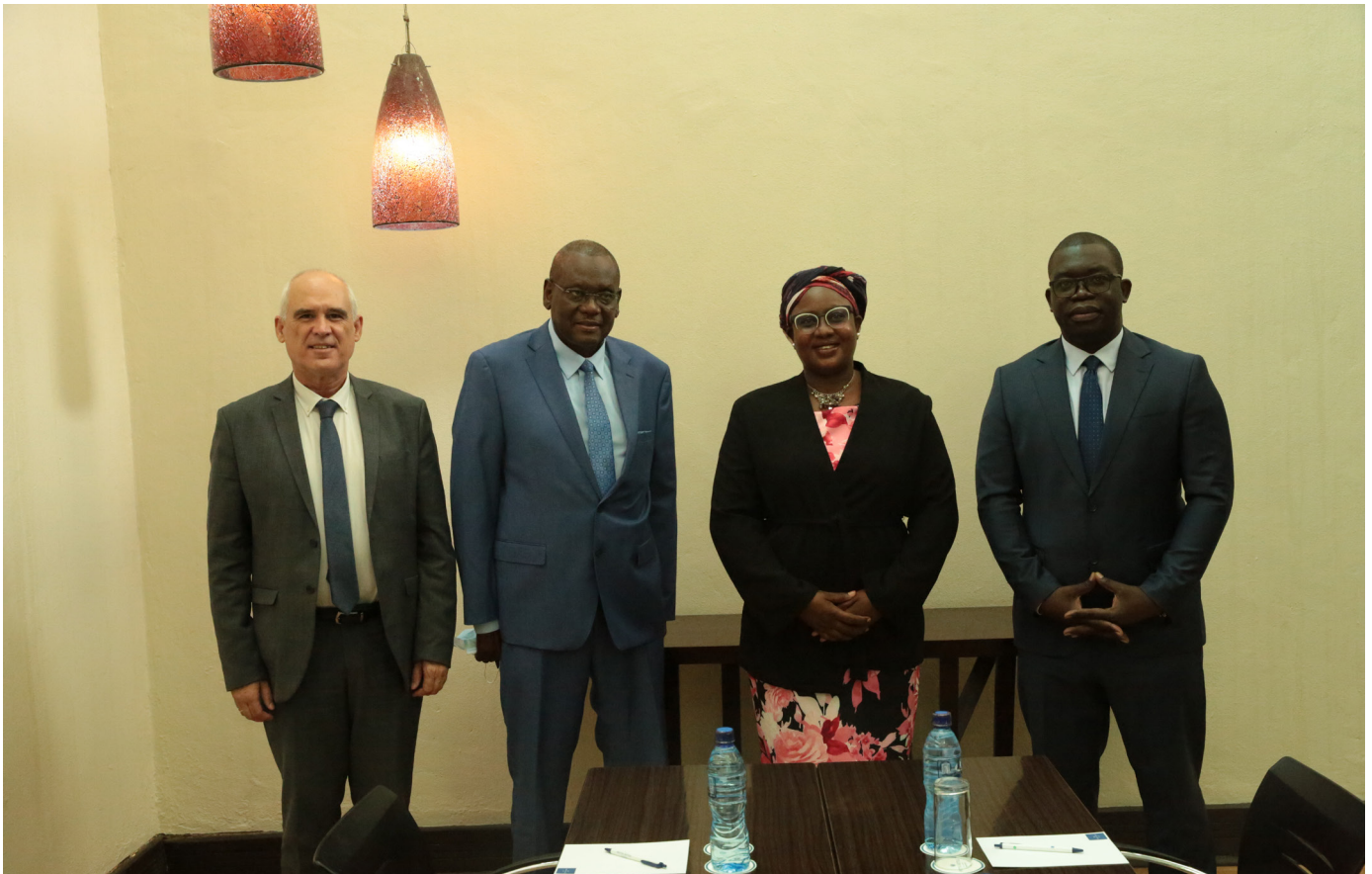
Delegates that attended the virtual validation workshop comprised of senior government officials from ministries, border agency officials, the private sector and representatives of the small-scale trading communities.

In his address, COMESA Assistant Secretary General in charge of programmes, Dr Kipyego Cheluget commended Member States that have already initiated bilateral discussions aimed at strengthening the STR regime, including review of common lists of products and applicable customs documentation.

"As we move forward let us all endeavor to make the STR work for our region rather than being seen as a source of discontent and barrier to cross-border trade," he said.



Euros 6.8 million Project to Upgrade Zambian Border Posts Launched



From left to right: Mr Bruno Hanses, Amb. Dr. Kipyego Cheluget, Ms Chawe Chuulu and Hon. Chipoka Mulenga

The Government of Zambia in partnership with the European Union (EU) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) have conducted the official launch of the 6.8 million Euros project to upgrade Zambian border posts.

The project, Zambia Border Posts Upgrade Project (ZBPUP), whose implementation has been underway since the signing of the financing agreement in November 2020, aims at improving intra-regional trade flows of goods, persons and services. It focuses on interventions identified as key to improving the trade and trade facilitation profile of Zambia.

So far, considerable progress has been made in capacity building and sensitization at the three border posts namely Mwami (Zambia/ Malawi), Chirundu (Zambia /Zimbabwe) and Nakonde (Zambia/Tanzania).

"This project will assist to improve, import and export procedures, transit requirements, customs and reduce time spent at the border," Zambia's Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry Hon. Chipoka Mulenga said during the launch ceremony in Lusaka on Thursday 24 February

2022. "The removal of incentives that contribute to corrupt practices will contribute to enhanced revenue collection and improve business competitiveness in Zambia."

The upgrade the three One Stop Border Posts (OSBP) will reduce clearance times and costs for passengers and goods processed. It will also aid in improving efficiency of the services offered by border agencies thereby increasing satisfaction among users of border facilities and revenue collection.

Besides, the project will help impact skills and capacity among border agencies and the private sector through a series of capacity building and sensitization activities on core trade facilitation issues. In addition, the ZBPUP will aid in reducing the number of reported Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) at the targeted three border posts.

Minister Mulenga appreciated the continued support provided by the COMESA Secretariat and the EU to his Ministry in trade facilitation matters. COMESA Secretary General Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe said strengthening of the physical and soft infrastructure in the region was key to

fostering economic integration.

"Specifically, it raises competitiveness through lowering production and transaction costs as well as enhancing value addition and investments," Ms Kapwepwe said. She was represented by the Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Amb. Dr. Kipyego Cheluget.

The two called for a sustained visibility and communications programme so that people are constantly aware of the improvements being made at the three borders.

This support for the upgrade project was provided under the overall Euro 48 million agreement signed between COMESA Secretariat and the European Union aimed at increasing intra-regional trade flows of goods, persons and services.

The EU was represented at the launch by Mr Bruno Hanses who reiterated Europe's support to COMESA's regional integration agenda. He said the EU is ready to share its experience and lessons learnt from its own internal market with COMESA and its Member States.

Zambian Media Enlisted in Projects' Communications



Media Practitioners with staff from the COMESA Secretariat and Ministry of Trade

Media practitioners in Zambia have been enlisted to play a role in supporting public communication of the regional integration programmes being implemented jointly by the government, COMESA and the European Union.

About 40 journalists comprising of editors and reporters participated separately in a two-day each sensitization programme conducted on 21 – 24 February 2022 in Lusaka. The event was organized by the Zambia Border Posts Upgrade Project (ZBPUP) funded under the 11th European Development Fund (EDF) under the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry.

Speakers at the forum stressed the role of the media in advancing regional integration by reporting on the different programmes and activities on integration.

"As COMESA, we do always recognize and cherish the important role played by media houses and individual journalists to COMESAs' integration agenda," Assistant Secretary General Dr Kipyego Cheluget said. "So important is the role of media that we have established a unique programme, the COMESA Media Award held annually since 2009."

The award aims to promote and encourage reporting of the COMESA regional integration programmes and recognize journalists whose works contribute to the integration agenda.

He urged the media to track implementation of various trade agreements/protocols signed by Member States to ensure accountability by governments to the regional integration agenda.

"The media can also assist in engagement of legislators to facilitate enactment of relevant trade related laws and regulations to drive integration issues in the region," he noted.

"Focus more and give prominence to success stories like the benefits of integration and less on challenges that may create negative public perceptions on such important development initiatives."

During the training several presentations were made on different topics including on the ZBPUP – its targets, successes and challenges, the COMESA EDF 11 programme and its status of implementation, the Regional Integration Support Mechanism (RISM), Opportunities and challenges of Zambia's participation in regional integration, the communication and visibility requirement under COMESA and the EU among many other topics.

COMESA Diary

Dates	NAME OF MEETING	VENUE
28 Feb - 3rd March	TradeSift – Online Training Programme for Trade Policy Analysis	Virtual
2 March	- Accreditation of Irish Ambassador to Zambia and Namibia & Special Representative to COMESA - Accreditation of AU-SARO Permanent Representative & Special Representative to COMESA	COMESA Secretariat, Lusaka
3 – 4 March	Validation Workshop of the draft Regional Minimum Energy Performance Standards (MEPS) and other regional guidelines	Chisamba, Zambia



Trade Experts Trained on Using TradeSift Technology

Close to 100 trade experts from COMESA Member States are undergoing a four-day online training on trade policy analysis using TradeSift tool being conducted by the University of Sussex, from 28 February to 3rd March 2022.

The training will empower the participants to analyse policy issues and effectively participate in trade negotiations. It is part of a series of programmes being financed by the European Union (EU) through the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) and counterpart funding by COMESA through the TradeCom II Capacity Building programme.

Modern Skills

The training is also part of the efforts by the organization to develop a cadre of researchers and experts who are conversant with modern skills being used to resolve different challenges facing regional integration in the region.

These include proliferation of non-tariff barriers and low levels of domestication, compliance and enforcement of agreed trading instruments. With TradeSift skills, the experts are expected to address poor or lack of appropriate policies and by extension inadequacy in human capacities and capabilities.

"As policy makers, researchers and analysts, I urge you to take this training seriously..."

the skills you are about to attain should be put into immediate use by supporting the trade policy making at national and regional levels," said the Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Dr Kipyego Cheluget when he opened the workshop, Monday 28 February 2022.

Dr Cheluget told the participants that COMESA attaches great value on research and evidence-based policy making at both the national and regional levels. Hence, it will continue to facilitate capacity building in all forms as mandated by the Treaty and ensure that the region's economic integration process is anchored on a strong policy-oriented foundation.

Dr Peter Holmes, representing the University of Sussex, urged the delegates to actively participate in the training and gain the much needed knowledge and skills.

TradeCom II capacity building project also supports the COMESA Annual Research Forum presently in its 9th cycle and the virtual master's degree programme in Regional Integration currently being offered by the University of Mauritius and Kenyatta University in Kenya.

Business Council and Federation of German Industries Forge Partnership

COMESA Business Council (CBC) and the Federation of German Industries (BDI) have signed a partnership agreement to implement programmes to strengthen CBC's business development services, enhance communication and strengthen membership engagement towards business advocacy.

The overall long-term objective is to facilitate the inclusive participation of COMESA's Private Sector in the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The signing took place on 9th February 2022 marking the beginning of the partnership expected to run until 2024.

"...with this partnership, we are looking forward to strengthening our business development activities, increasing our membership, and enhancing the private sector's engagement in pushing forward the implementation of the AfCFTA," CBC Chief Executive Officer, Ms Sandra Uwera said. BDI Head of Sub-Saharan Africa Mr Matthias Wachter said:

"We are honoured to partner with CBC and look forward to working very closely over the next three years towards strengthening the institution's capacity to contribute to the enhancement of intra-regional trade, within the regional integration agenda."

The CBC is the recognized regional apex body of the private sector in COMESA while the BDI is an umbrella organization of German industry and industry related services. It speaks on behalf of 36 sector associations and represents the interest of German Industries in and outside Germany.



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