

## Regional Food Balance Sheet Rollout

Stakeholders' committee hold Inaugural meeting in Lusaka

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L-R: Chief Agriculture Economist in Zambia's Ministry of Agriculture Mr Bernard Mumba, COMESA Assistant Secretary General Dr Dev Haman, AGRA Vice-President Dr Apollos Nwafor and COMESA Director of Industry and Agriculture Mrs Providence Mavubi

Senior Government officials from the Ministries of Agriculture in Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia and representatives of key regional private sector associations that make up the Committee of the Regional Food Balance Sheet (RFBS) Initiative convened in Lusaka, Zambia 14 – 16 March 2023 to advance stakeholders' ownership and governance of the RFBS.

The main objective of the three-day meeting was to provide strategic direction and guidance to the RFBS effort which aims at strengthening agri-food data/ information system in the COMESA-EAC-SADC region.

The RFBS initiative aims at accelerating the application of digital, remote sensing, and advanced analytical technologies to provide data and forecasts on production, trade, prices, stocks, and consumption for major food commodities in

the Eastern and Southern Africa region.

This data will inform policy and business decisions on food security, agricultural trade as well as investment. For example, in showing food surplus and deficit areas, the RFBS provides a signal to private traders, millers, and other aggregators to inform when and where to source and where to ship food commodities.

The COMESA Secretariat will facilitate inclusive data sharing within and among the key actors as well as facilitate engagement on the necessary policy reforms based on RFBS outputs.

COMESA Secretariat in collaboration with the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and a couple of technical and technology partners, is implementing the RFBS which was jointly launched in September 2022.

So far, progress has been recorded in the implementation of this initiative with the support from the six pilot countries.

Speaking at the launch of the committee on 14 March 2023, COMESA Assistant Secretary General for Administration and Finance Dr Dev Haman said:

"The Secretariat will play a lead role in the

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"The RFBS is an African solution to an African problem which all countries should embrace as their own and ensure that it works," Dr Apollos Nwafor



*Border officials attending health crisis management training.*

## Border Officials Trained on Handling Health Emergencies

Senior officials working at strategic border posts in the region attended a four-day training programme on border management during health emergencies in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic on 7 - 10 March 2023 in Lusaka, Zambia..

The training targeted immigration, customs, border police, port health and trade officials from Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe serving at the Mwami-Mchinji and Chirundu One Stop Border Posts.

The training was coordinated by the COMESA Secretariat in collaboration with the European Union and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) through the Migration EU Expertise (MIEUX) initiative funded by the EU. The aim is to enhance the knowledge and skills of the officials to better manage health emergencies.

Speaking at the opening of the training, Director of Legal and Institutional Affairs at COMESA Secretariat Mr Gabriel Masuku said it would build on the existing COMESA COVID-19 and Tripartite Guidelines on Trade and Transport Facilitation for movement of persons, goods and services. "This training will provide a comprehensive

approach to strengthening border management capacities, with the inclusion of healthcare systems in border control, and supporting national focal agencies to develop and implement preparedness and response-based action plans in border crossings," Mr Masuku said.

The need for such training became evident when the COVID-19 pandemic struck, at a time when COMESA did not have modalities to deploy to facilitate continued and safe cross border regional trade and investment. Most Member States closed their borders, thus adversely affecting regional and international trade and economies.

Stressing the need for such preparedness, the Director noted that businesses failed and some ended up closing down permanently leaving a lot of people without jobs and by extension without food for their families and households. This led COMESA to develop the Guidelines to facilitate a safe movement of goods and services across borders.

In addition, the COMESA-EAC-SADC-Tripartite Free Trade Area exposed the gap in capacity development for border officials to assist them in facilitating a safe movement of goods and services

across the political divide during a health crisis which the MIEUX+ programme sought to bridge. The Program Manager at the Delegation of the European Union in Lusaka Ms. Christiane Haziyo appreciated the Initiative's focus on enhancing migration and mobility which results in facilitating trade and mobility within the COMESA region.

"These training sessions will tool the border community stakeholders with the knowledge and practical examples on how to prepare and manage health crisis," Ms Haziyo said.

The ICMPD Project Officer and MIEUX+ focal point for Eastern and Southern Africa Ms. Naike Chancy also addressed the participants.

The EU and ICMPD have provided technical support to COMESA for over a decade but this particular project on migration through the MIEUX+ programme started in 2020.





## Regional Food Balance Sheet rollout..

governance of the RFBS initiative, bring together senior decision makers, lead outreach efforts and garner buy-in from key public and private actors.”

He added that there will be need for deliberate efforts to ensure that the data/information needs of the key stakeholders/end-users including women and youth in the region are adequately addressed.

The Chief Agriculture Economist in Zambia's Ministry of Agriculture Mr Bernard Mumba urged the committee to actively participate in the deliberations and contribute to having a food balance sheet that will effectively serve the region.

He added that the RFBS is crucial for the region and governments, the private sector, and other stakeholders need to be open and share relevant data to enable evidence-based policy, business, and investment decisions for inclusive socio-economic development.

Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) which is co-leading in the implementation of the RFBS commended COMESA for driving the process and taking up the leadership role to ensure that the Initiative is fully implemented.

AGRA Vice- President for Policy and Capability, Dr Apollon Nwafor described the Initiative as “an African solution to an African problem which all countries should embrace as their own and ensure that it works.”

Partners attending the meeting included AGRA, the Eastern Africa Grains Council (EAGC), the Southern Africa Federation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU), the Eastern Africa Farmers Federation (EAFB), the Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development (RCMRD), the COMESA Business Council (CBC) and TETRA TECH.



## COMESA Court Suspends Grant of Subsidy Issued by Mauritius Government to the State Trading Corporation

A decision of the Government of Mauritius to grant a subsidy to the Mauritius State Trading Corporation (STC) has been suspended by the Appellate Division of the COMESA Court of Justice (CCJ). The action has been taken pending the hearing and determination of an appeal that has been filed by Agiliss Ltd, a private limited company and principal importer and distributor of staple foods in Mauritius.

According to Agiliss, on 7 June 2022, the Government decided to unilaterally grant a subsidy of MUR 500 million (approximately \$10.6m) to STC, which subsidy was related to the importation of edible oils into Mauritius.

Agiliss argued that the decision was in breach of several Articles of the COMESA Treaty relating to competition, trade remedies and safeguards. The Government, on its part, argued that the move was intended to promote the manufacture and sale of cooking oil (among other commodities) to the public at affordable prices.

Agiliss had challenged the grant of the subsidy before the First Instance Division of the CCJ and sought an interim injunction suspending operation of the decision. The First Instance Division declined to grant the interim injunction based on lack of jurisdiction for failure to exhaust domestic remedies. It is this finding of want of jurisdiction that Agiliss is challenging before the Appellate

Division.

The Government maintains that the CCJ lacks jurisdiction to entertain the matter because Agiliss did not comply with Article 26 of the COMESA Treaty on exhaustion of domestic remedies.

The Appellate Division held that Agiliss had sufficiently demonstrated that it would suffer irreparable losses that would not be adequately compensated by way of damages if the injunction was not granted. The Appeal will be coming up for hearing in due course.

The COMESA Court of Justice was established in 1994 under Article 7 of the COMESA Treaty as the judicial organ of COMESA. The Court adjudicates and arbitrates on, among other matters, unfair trade practices, interpretation of Treaty (Protocols and other legislative acts) and ensures that Member States uniformly implement and comply with agreed decisions. Decisions of the Court on the interpretation of the provisions of the COMESA Treaty have precedence over decisions of national courts and are binding on all COMESA Member States.

**Full ruling available on:** <https://www.comesa.int/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Agiliss-v-The-Republic-of-Mauritius-and-3-Others-Ruling-March-2023.pdf>



The PS Ministry of ICT, Kenya, Eng. John Tanui (front middle) flanked by COMESA Directors Mr J.B Mutabazi (R) and Ms Lanka Dorby (L) and other delegates at the EGEE-ICT meeting

# The €8m Regional ICT Programme Implementation Reviewed

## *The 3rd Project Steering Committee Meeting conducted in Kenya*

The Steering Committee of the programme on Enhancement of Governance and Enabling Environment in the ICT sector (EGEE-ICT) in the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, and the Indian Ocean region (EA-SA-IO) have reviewed the programme's performance, since it was launched two years ago. The review was done in Nairobi, Kenya 2 – 3 March 2023 during the third meeting of the steering committee.

The eight million euros programme aims at enhancing the governance and enabling environment in the ICT sector in the EA-SA-IO region. It supports the review and development of regional policy and regulatory frameworks in a harmonized manner, thus contributing to enhanced competition and improved access to cost effective and secure ICT services. The four-year programme is funded by the European Union.

Beneficiaries of the programme are countries in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC), Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), Indian Ocean Commission (IOC) and Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). COMESA is the programme implementation lead.

The Principal Secretary, Ministry of Information, Communication, and Technology and the Digital

Economy in Kenya Eng. John Tanui opened the meeting. He urged countries in the region "to seize the significant socio-economic opportunities that digital technologies offer."

"All of us would agree that living in a modern society without ICT is unimaginable. Think about how many times and how often we are using the internet, mobile phones and computers," said the PS. The technologies that enable this have been integrated in every aspect of our business activities and daily lives."

He stressed that accessibility and affordability are the key factors for utilizing ICT solutions for e-services and for reaching all groups of society in order to transform the landscape for development.

He added: "The Ministry of Information, Communications and the Digital Economy in Kenya has committed to digitalize all government services, lay 100,000km of fibre optic cable across the country under the Digital Superhighway, install 25,000 public Wi-Fi hotspots, establish 1,450 digital village smart hubs and studios and enhance cyber security management, in the next five years.

The Director of Infrastructure and Logistics in COMESA, Mr Jean-Baptiste Mutabazi said programmes such as the EGEE-ICT that target the

ICT sector, are significant because they ensure that current development issues in the sector are prioritized.

"Regional Harmonisation is one of the best approaches in achieving success in development. Therefore, Regional cooperation needs to be strengthened. The EGEE-ICT programme creates an exceptional opportunity of bringing together multiple stakeholders to work towards handling some of the critical ICT issues with the aim of creating an enabling environment that will foster ICT growth," he said.

The Nairobi meeting is the third for the Steering Committee whose objective was to review the progress of the programmes' activities undertaken between May 2022 and January 2023 and adoption of the programme's Annual Work Plan for 2023. The EGEE-ICT programme is one of the contributors to the AU flagship projects namely the Pan African e-Network, Policy, and Regulation Initiative for Digital Africa (PRIDA), and the Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa 2020-2030.

Members of the PSC comprise of representatives of the five regional economic communities, Member/ Partner States, and private sector. Representatives from the regional ICT Associations and continental ICT sector will participate in the meeting as observers.





## COMESA, Partners Hold High-Level Engagement on Sidelines of CSW67

COMESA, the East African Community (EAC) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the three regional economic communities which are jointly implementing the 50 Million African Women Speak digital platform (50MAWSP), held a high-level partners engagement on Wednesday 8 March to mobilise support for the next phase of the initiative.

The meeting took place on the sidelines of the 67th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW67) which took place at the United Nations headquarters in New York, USA.

Dignitaries in attendance included Ugandan State Minister for Gender and Culture Hon. Peace Regis Mutuuzo, AU Permanent Observer to the UN Amb. Fatima Kyari Mohamed, ECOWAS Commissioner Prof. Fatou Sow Sarr and high-level representatives from partners including the World Bank, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the AfCFTA Secretariat, among others.

The dignitaries took turns to emphasize the importance of 50MAWSP as a viable tool for the empowerment of women and appealed to partners to support its transformation, citing its untapped potential to create economic opportunities for women and youth. The speakers at the event unanimously agreed that undertaking significant

platform feature enhancements would be key to unlocking this potential.

"The recommendations that have consistently featured in the feedback from users include the integration of e-commerce to enable the women to trade with each other on the platform, enhancement of the platform to support live trainings to build the capacity of women to manage their businesses better, integration with financial services providers to allow users to seamlessly access credit, for example by requesting loans in-platform," COMESA Secretary General HE Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe said.

Ugandan State Minister for Gender and Culture Hon. Peace Regis Mutuuzo, who presided over the opening of the event, made a passionate appeal for the platform to be supported so that it could in turn

support women and youth.

"Imagine how much support we could lend to the post-COVID recovery effort of building back better by enabling this platform to facilitate access to credit by creating grant schemes for the exclusive benefit of platform users.

"My appeal is for you to extend a hand of support that launches us into the next critical phase," she said.

On her part, AU Permanent Observer to the UN Amb. Fatima Kyari Mohamed affirmed that the continental body fully endorses the work of our regional economic communities on this initiative, "because in [50 Million African Women Speak] we see a real potential to transform the lives of millions of women, literally with a click of a button."

**"Imagine how much support we could lend to the post-COVID recovery effort of building back better by enabling this platform to facilitate access to credit by creating grant schemes for the exclusive benefit of platform users." Hon. Peace Regis Mutuuzo**



Gender experts from Zambia attending a Capacity Building Workshop on Gender Statistics in Lusaka, Zambia

## Stakeholders from Public Institutions in Zambia Trained on Production of Gender Statistics

More than 40 officials from different government institutions in Zambia have been trained to produce and use timely data for effective policy making. This is in addition to building their capacity in gender statistics terminologies and methodologies, thereby strengthening their knowledge of different gender policies at the global and regional level.

The training was conducted during a workshop on 28 Feb to 2 March 2023 in Lusaka, Zambia. The training

was supported by the European Union through the Institutional Capacity Building Programme (ICBP). This was the second of the series that COMESA Secretariat has lined up to support Member States on strengthening the capacity of gender statistics. The first workshop was conducted in Djibouti in 2022 while the next is planned for Sudan.

Speaking during the opening ceremony, Assistant Secretary General Administration and Finance Dr Dev

Haman, said the Secretariat takes gender equality as central to the process of sustainable development and the foundation of the effective national development policies and programmes, for which data that reflects the current geopolitical reality is required.

He pointed out that gender statistics are needed to measure and monitor the realities of the lives of women and men and of girls and boys, so that development is inclusive and does not leave anyone behind.

At COMESA level, he indicated that the instruments developed and adopted by Member States include among others, the COMESA Gender Policy, the COMESA Gender Policy Implementation Plan and the COMESA Gender Mainstreaming Guidelines, Indicators and Check Lists.

"Therefore, gender statistics have a crucial role in gender mainstreaming in social, economic, political and in the development and implementation of poverty reduction policies. As COMESA Secretariat we are working with Member States to strengthen the production of gender statistics," Dr Haman added.

The participants agreed on the need to enhance collaboration between the Ministry of Gender, other ministries and entities and the national statistics office if the objective of producing comprehensive, quality and timely statistical information on gender dimensions across sectors is to be successfully attained.

The Director of Gender in Development from the Zambian government Mr Henry Nkhoma noted that the absence of clear indicators for monitoring and evaluation of gender mainstreaming as well as limited availability of gender statistics data for effective programme design has made it difficult to assess the impact attributable to gender mainstreaming efforts.



Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Country Representative for Zambia, Suze Percy Filippin (L) pays a courtesy call on the Secretary General, Chileshe Kapwepwe, 28 February 2023. They discussed possible ways of strengthening the already existing collaboration between the two organisations especially in the area of Agriculture which will result in enhanced food security in the region.

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**"Gender statistics have a crucial role in gender mainstreaming in social, economic, political and in the development and implementation of poverty reduction policies." Dr Dev Haman**



## Japanese and Italian Envoys Accredited to COMESA



L - R: Japanese Ambassador H.E. Takeuchi Kazuyuki, COMESA SG, Chileshe Kapwepwe and Italian Ambassador H.E. Dr. Enrico De Agostini at the accreditation ceremony.

Italian and Japanese Ambassadors to Zambia have been accredited as Special Representatives of their respective countries to COMESA. H.E. Dr. Enrico De Agostini (Italy) and H.E. Takeuchi Kazuyuki presented their letters of credence to the Secretary General, Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe at a brief ceremony conducted at the COMESA Secretariat in Lusaka on Tuesday 28 February 2023.

The Secretary General called for high commitment and strengthened collaboration with both Italy and Japan especially in the areas of Agriculture and Technology.

"There are more potential areas where COMESA and Italy could work together to further strengthen our cooperation and partnership such as agro-processing, the leather sector and livestock among others," she said. She noted that apart from the bilateral collaboration between Italy and COMESA, there is also collaboration through the European Union of which Italy is a member.

The European Union is the biggest development partner of COMESA and based on the 'Team Europe' approach, the European Union and Italy will work towards the effective implementation of the Neighborhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI).

Madam Kapwepwe also applauded the Japanese Government, which through the 7th Tokyo International Conference on Africa's Development (TICAD7) meeting agreed to focus on promoting business projects between COMESA and Japan which saw Japan's exports to Sub-Saharan Africa, including COMESA Member States, increase to approximately 6.3m USD with imports at 7.5m USD.

"Since TICAD7, we have not had any joint programmes/projects with Japan and we look forward to identifying possible areas of cooperation to further our partnership," She added.

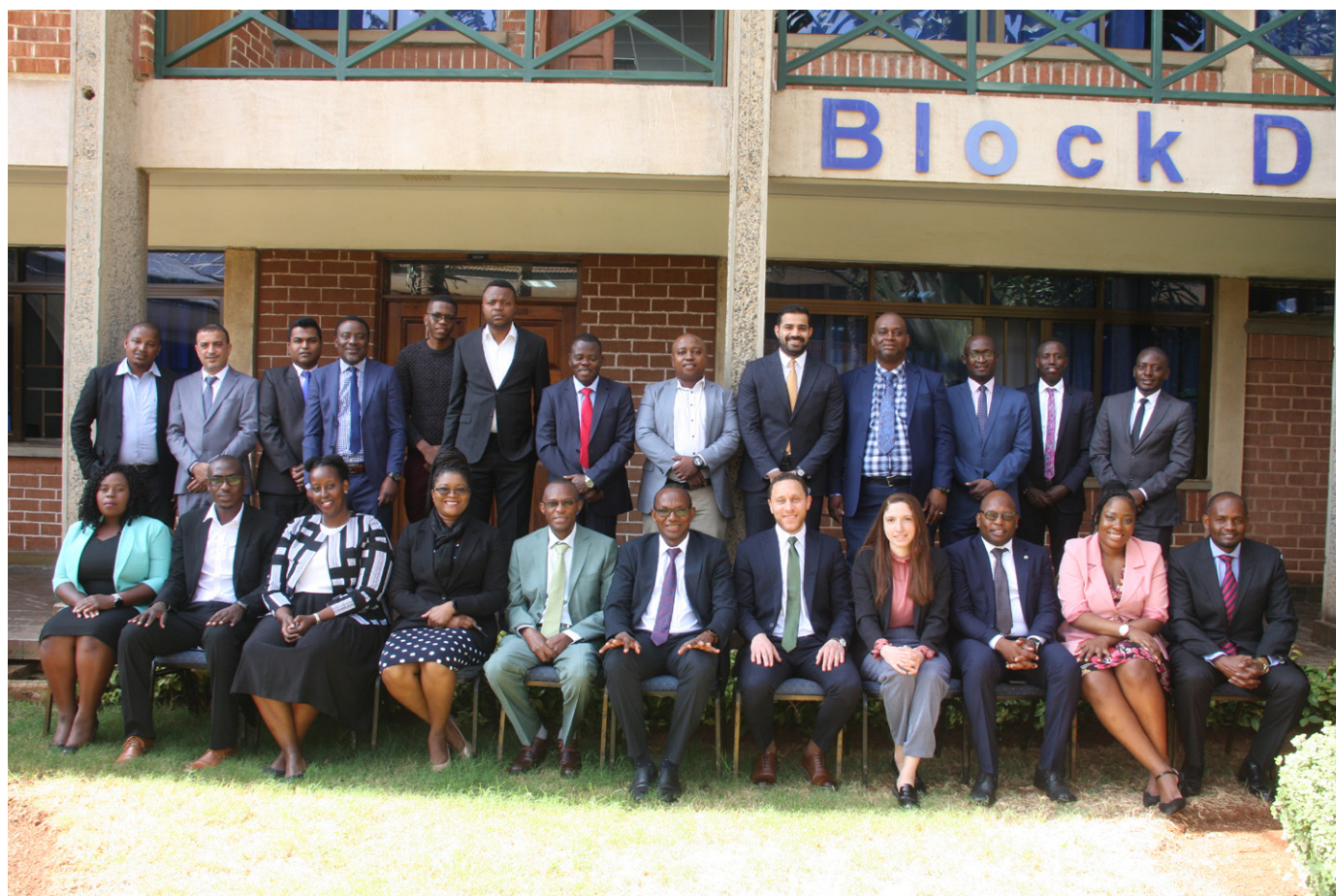
Ambassador Agostini, said his country is willing to engage with COMESA and collaborate in the infrastructure, agriculture, manufacturing and green

energy in order to overcome the common global challenges.

"Italy and our industries with their enormous expertise in infrastructure, agriculture, and green energy are ready to cooperate with COMESA and its Member States in order to bridge the gap in the named sectors," Amb. Agostini said.

In his remarks, Ambassador Kazuyuki promised to engage more closely with the COMESA Secretariat and Member States to deepen the cooperation.

**"There are more potential areas where COMESA and Italy could work together to further strengthen our cooperation and partnership such as agro-processing, the leather sector and livestock among others," Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe**



Banking Supervisors and Financial Stability analysts from regional Central Banks attending the validation workshop for the User Guide on Basel III.

## Banking Supervisors and Financial Stability Analysts Trained on Basel III and Macro-prudential Surveillance

Twenty-two banking supervisors and financial stability analysts from 11 Central Banks of COMESA Member States attended a validation workshop for the User Guide on "Basel III and Macro-prudential Surveillance" conducted on 06 – 10 March 2023 in Nairobi, Kenya.

The User Guide was developed to enhance better understanding of the Basel III standards, principles and detail the applicable tools and techniques for conducting supervision under the revised Basel III framework by COMESA member countries. Hence the validation workshop provided a platform to get feedback on the User Guide to further improve its content.

Central banks of Burundi, Congo DR, Egypt, Kenya,

Libya, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe were represented at the event. The User Guide provides an easy-to-use document on Basel III standards and principles within the context of conducting supervision under this revised framework for the COMESA region. Basel III is an international regulatory accord that introduced a set of reforms designed to mitigate risk within the international banking sector.

In his address to the delegates, the Director of the CMI, Dr. Lucas Njoroge, underscored the need for the implementation of Basel III framework within the internationally agreed timeframe to strengthen the resilience of the banking system, improve market confidence and promote a level playing field.

"COMESA member countries are making progress at implementing the different facets of the Basel accords, with the User Guide providing a critical input that will ensure harmonization and comparison of progress," he said.

He added that the Guide will be an important knowledge product to enhance the implementation of the COMESA Financial System Development and Stability Plan as it provides a detailed exposure to Basel III standards and elaborates in detail the tools and techniques for conducting supervision under Basel III framework.





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