

Development of a Regional Food Balance Sheet at Advanced Stage

The Regional Food Balance Sheet will provide reliable, timely, and accurate data for food and nutrition security-related decision-making.



Front (R – L): Ms. Providence Mavubi, Director, Agriculture and Industry (COMESA) Dr Apollos Nwafor, Dr Kipyego Cheluget, Mr John Mulongoti and Mr Nicholas Woolley with participants at the demonstration workshop of the digital Regional Food Balance Sheet in Lusaka, Zambia

The Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) and COMESA are leading an effort to develop a digital Regional Food Balance Sheet (RFBS) that uses data from a variety of public and private sources to develop near real-time and forward-looking food balance estimates.

Once fully developed and operational, the RFBS will inform data-driven decisions around production support, trade policy, and stock management by governments, business decision-making and investment by the private sector, and food assistance by donors and emergency response organizations. Six countries are so far involved in the pilot phase namely, Kenya, Rwanda, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia and Tanzania.

The initiative was in response to the lack of reliable, timely, and accurate data for food and nutrition security related decision-making in many Sub Sahara Africa countries, a situation

that was exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In recognition of these data gaps and needs, COMESA Council of Ministers, in 2020 directed COMESA Secretariat, to implement a COMESA-wide RFBS initiative.

This led to a collaborative and multi-stakeholder engagement, which has COMESA as the convener and eventual host of the platform, with support from a range of analytical and technology partners. They include Regional Centre for Mapping of Resources for Development, NASA Harvest/UMD, Bureau for Food and Agriculture Policy and Tetra Tech (among other key data providers in the region). Development partners supporting the project are the UK government, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, and the United States Agency for Internal Development (USAID).

On Friday, June 10, 2022, in Lusaka, Zambia,

COMESA, AGRA and implementing partners conducted a physical demonstration of the RFBS platform for review by representatives from the six pilot countries, representing ministries responsible for agriculture, food security, and national statistics agencies. Others were regional private sector associations and development partners.

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Mr Woolley

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Saudi Seeks New Investments in COMESA



Advisor in the Royal Court of the Saudi Kingdom, His Excellency Mr. Ahmed bin Abdulaziz Kattan (3rd left) and Assistant Secretaries General, Dr. Dev Haman (centre) and Dr Kipyego Cheluget (R), COMESA Permanent Representatives and Secretariat staff

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia seeks to enhance relations with countries in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa by establishing new areas of investment and development through the COMESA Secretariat.

On Thursday, 9 June 2022 the Advisor in the Royal Court of the Saudi Kingdom, His Excellency Mr. Ahmed bin Abdulaziz Kattan, visited COMESA Secretariat, to discuss cooperation and seek support in hosting the World Expo 2030 in Saudi Arabia.

He met with ambassadors and high commissioners of COMESA States based in Zambia and COMESA management led by then Acting Secretary General Dr Dev Haman.

Mr Kattan conveyed a special message from King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and His Royal Highness Crown prince Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, expressing interest in cooperating with COMESA to advance the interest of its Member States.

He said: "The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

considers COMESA as an important organisation in achieving the objectives of the Arab-African partnership. I look forward to this meeting as a starting point for further coordination and cooperation between the Kingdom and all Member States."

Mr Kattan said the Kingdom had committed US\$1 billion for investment projects in Africa in the following sectors: industry, finance, agriculture, fishing, mining, transportation, regional security and energy.

Further, he said Saudi Arabia has contributed funds to the development of Africa including fighting hunger, poverty, epidemics and pandemics such as the COVID-19. A total of \$500 million was provided to combat COVID-19, \$150m in the vaccine alliance and \$200m in supporting health entities.

The Kingdom is also seeking to achieve deeper relations and participate in development efforts through investment initiatives that will be launched in many African countries in coordination with African regional organisations such as COMESA.

With diplomatic representation in 27 countries on the African continent, Saudi Arabia will this year be hosting the first Saudi-Africa Summit and the fifth Arab-African Summit, to which COMESA Secretariat has been invited. Mr Kattan asked for COMESA's support in its bid to host the World Expo 2030 in Riyadh.

In his remarks, Dr Haman said the support and commitment exhibited by Saudi Arabia was a true testimony of the strong relations that have existed between the Kingdom and African countries over the years. He appreciated Saudi Arabia's decision to seek new investment and development opportunities in COMESA, which he noted will focus on uplifting the standards of living of the people.

Dr Haman added that COMESA will continue to create an enabling environment for private sector investment to thrive, through trade facilitation, market integration, infrastructure development and industrialization among others.

The Saudi delegation mission has so far covered 20 of the 21 COMESA Member with



Malawi Minister of Trade Hon. Mark Katsonga Phiri (2nd right), COMFWB Chief Executive officer Ruth Negash (3rd right) and beneficiaries at the launch of a cooking oil processing line at Homes Industries Limited in Karonga, Malawi

Small-Scale Women-led Industrial Projects Launched in Malawi

COMFWB has also signed implementation agreements with other women-owned organizations to implement textile and agro-processing projects, business incubators and a microfinance institution

The Malawi Chapter of the COMESA Federation of National Associations of Women in Business (COMFWB) has launched three small-scale women-owned and led industrial projects in the northern region of the country. The launch took place on 6 – 7 June 2022 in Nkhata Bay, Mzuzu and Karonga.

Three organisations namely, Homes Industries Limited in Karonga, Chiwila Women in Landcare & Agribusiness in Mzuzu, and Lusolawo Cooperative in Nkhata Bay are among the beneficiaries of the projects. Homes Industries launched a cooking oil processing line on 6 June 2022 while Chiwila and Lusolawo launched cassava plant and solar driers respectively on the following day.

The establishment and growth of such small-scale agro-based industries is expected to add value to job and wealth creation, food security and nutrition, and the creation of opportunities for Malawian women and youth to engage in competitive agriculture value chains as outlined in the Malawi National Development Plan 2063 (MW2063).

Representatives of women associations in Malawi, the COMFWB Malawi Chapter

Chairperson and executive board members, the COMFWB Chief Executive Officer, Ms Ruth Negash, staff and senior officials from the Ministry of Trade and Industry were among the participants.

Trade and Industry Minister Hon. Mark Katsonga Phiri presided over the launch. He said COMFWB's mandate and role were strategically aligned to the country's national development plan.

"More specifically in support of Pillar 1 on Agricultural Productivity and Commercialisation and Pillar 2 on Industrialisation, the plan affirms our collective ambition to develop Malawi into a food secure nation with a highly productive and commercialised agriculture sector that feeds into and propels the country's manufacturing industry," Mr Phiri said.

COMFWB, through the Malawi Chapter has up scaled the implementation of business incubator for African Women Enterprises (BIAWE) program and implemented various interventions in the Cassava value chains as indicated by Ms Negash.

"The program outcome includes establishment of clusters, provision of skills required by Cassava SMEs, enhancement in knowledge of Cassava trading centers and facilities, and creation of regional sector value chain supply and demand database."

COMFWB Malawi Chapter has also signed implementation agreements with several other women-owned organizations in Malawi to implement Textile and Agro-processing projects and to establish business incubators and a Microfinance institution.

Chapter chairperson, Barbra Banda appreciated the COMFWB Secretariat and the Malawi government for the support which has led to the launch of the women projects

COMFWB was established in July 1993 in Zimbabwe with the endorsement of the Authority which is made up of Heads of States and Governments of the COMESA Member States.

Comoros to have a National Energy Regulation Board



Secretary General, Ministry of Energy, Water and Hydrocarbons, Comoros, Madam Najda Said Abdallah, (2nd right, front), with participants at the national workshop,

Comoros is set to establish an autonomous energy regulator with support from the project on Enhancement of a Sustainable Regional Energy Market (ESREM) in the Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, and Indian Ocean (EA-SA-IO) Region. Currently, the island country has no active energy regulator.

The ESREM is a seven million euros European Union funded project whose implementation was led by COMESA in partnership with the regional economic communities including the East Africa Community, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, Indian Ocean Commission and the Southern Africa Development Community.

Among the deliverables of the project, whose tenure ended last month, was to support Member States in enhancing regulatory capacity and strengthening capacity of the regional associations and power pools so that they can proactively influence developments in the energy sector.

Pursuant to this objective, Comoros hosted a National Workshop on Regulation 23 – 24 May 2022, aimed at facilitating dialogue between regulation experts from the region and Energy Sector leadership in Moroni, as

part of the drive to establish an autonomous energy regulator.

The meeting drew participation from various organizations relevant to the development of the Comoros national energy sector. Among them were representatives from the Ministry of Energy, Water and Hydrocarbons, National Power Utility, National Water Utility, representatives from the Private Sector and International Cooperation Partners.

The objective was to enable the target audience to appreciate the importance of establishing energy regulatory and institutional frameworks in supporting national governments' long-term objectives of providing affordable and reliable energy supply and services to its citizens.

The workshop was officially opened by the Secretary General of the Ministry of Energy, Water and Hydrocarbons, Madam Njda Said Abdallah. The Minister expressed gratitude to COMESA and the European Union, for the successful implementation of the ESREM project.

"Comoros considers electrical energy as an essential element of the productivity of industrial activities and tourism development as part of economic growth

plans, and therefore, electricity will play a key role in driving the economic transformation by allowing the various economic actors to have access to a quality resource at an affordable cost," she added.

Chief Executive Officer of the Regional Association of Energy Regulators for Eastern and Southern Africa (RAERESA) of COMESA Dr. Mohamedain Seif Elnasr cited key challenges facing the sector in the region. They include under-developed regulatory frameworks, absence of autonomous regulatory environment in some Member States and harmonized regulatory framework to support an integrated electricity market at regional level in the EA-SA-IO. This had increased the regulatory risk, complicated implementation modalities and inhibited investment decisions on electricity infrastructure projects.

The ESREM project which came to an end on 30 May 2022 provided technical support to align Member States' national legislations with the adopted harmonized regional regulatory framework through development of 12 regional guidelines to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency initiatives and provisions of trainings to 363 officials from the region.



Development of a Regional ...

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COMESA at the AU Summit on Terrorism, Unconstitutional Removal of Governments



: The 16th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Governments of the African Union

COMESA Secretariat was among Regional Economic Communities that participated in the 16th Extraordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Governments of the African Union on terrorism and unconstitutional changes of government held on 28 May 2022 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

The Summit assessed the persistent threat that the upsurge of terrorism and incidences of unconstitutional changes of government have continued to impact on the peace, security, stability, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Member States.

The Summit agenda was aligned with COMESA activities with the AU, Civil Society and other RECs implements through the Governance, Peace and Security Programme. Among them is the COMESA Early Warning System (COMWARN) that identifies structural vulnerability/ resilience drivers at a very early stage and provide ample time for decision makers to initiate the necessary and appropriate responses. The initiative is part of the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) framework.

In 2021 COMESA collaborated with the

African Union's Continental Early Warning System (CEWS) to support Zambia in undergoing the Country Structural Vulnerability and Resilience Assessment (CSVRA) process where nationwide multi-stakeholder consultations were held with various stakeholders in order to enhance the resilience and address vulnerabilities identified.

On consolidation of democracy in the region, COMESA has been supporting Member States through the deployment of election observer missions. On terrorism, efforts have been made as well towards strengthening linkages and cooperation between the AU's Centre for the Study and Research on Terrorism (CAERT) and select national counter-terrorism centres aimed at enhancing peer learning and capacity-strengthening through training.

COMESA was represented at the Summit by the Director of Gender and Social Affairs Mrs Beatrice Hamusonde and Mr Raymond Kitevu- the Conflict Early Warning Expert.

Addressing the delegates, COMESA Assistant Secretary General, Dr Kipyego Cheluget said gaps in food system data had made it challenging to understand who the food insecure were, where they lived and the level of food insecurity they were experiencing.

"These data gaps left many countries unable to respond effectively to the food needs of their citizens during this COVID-19 pandemic," he noted. "Several stakeholders, including, governments, academic institutions, private sector, and humanitarian agencies, collect data, but rarely are these data shared or consolidated into one central database that can be used to inform decision-making by the stakeholders."

Speaking at the RFBS demonstration, the UK High Commissioner to Zambia, Mr Nicholas Woolley said avoiding disruptions in the food supply chains, for most COMESA countries, will be a critical part of building resilience in the region's food systems now and into the future.

"There is an urgent need for African governments to better understand the current and projected food status of their nations. Demand patterns, input availability and shifting climates are part of the knowledge needed to build future-resilient food security," noted Mr Woolley who is also the Special Representative of the UK to COMESA.

In his remarks, AGRA Vice President, Dr Apollos Nwafor described the RFBS as a suitable tool for estimating the overall shortages and surpluses in the region as well as developing projections of future food supply and demand needs which help in setting targets for agricultural production and trade.

Zambia's Director of Agriculture and Marketing Mr John Mulongoti, representing the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, pledged his country's support to the initiative.

Data for the RFBS will be sourced from historic records from national governments and validated by the Food and Agricultural Organization, current season estimates from private and public data partners throughout East and Southern Africa, and both real-time and future estimates which use advanced analytics from satellite imagery and other technologies.



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