

Over four Million Seed Labels Developed & Ready for Use



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Welcome to the COMESA Plant Variety Catalogue

The objective of the COMESA Variety Release System is to encourage investment in seed business in the COMESA Member States, to enhance access to new and existing varieties in the COMESA Member States, and to stimulate the breeding and availability of seed varieties resulting in increased variety choices for all farmers.

This website allows plant breeders/ seed developers to register varieties in the COMESA Catalogue and seed users to find varieties which can be legally commercialized among the 20 COMESA countries.

Seed users can select varieties adapted to their Agro-Ecological Zones, with short technical descriptions. For more detailed descriptions or orders, they will find commercial contact references associated to each variety.

Plant breeders who want to apply for regional registration of a variety fulfilling the COMESA Variety Release System requirements have to create a breeder's account in the restricted access area.

National Seed authorities will also have access to the varieties database through the restricted area.

Online COMESA Variety Catalogue

designed by SEMENTO realized by Seed Media

The COMESA Seed Programme through the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) has developed over four million physical seed labels that are ready for use by seed companies in the region. The labels will enable companies engage in regional seed trade for large seed consignments crossing the borders and in-country seed trade in smaller packages.

ACTESA/COMESA Seed Expert Dr John Mukuka revealed in Lusaka that the Seed Labels can be stuck on different sizes of bags including 1kg, 2kg, 5kg, 10kg, 20kg and 25kg bags within a 30 to 40 metric tonnes COMESA certified seed lot.

"The COMESA Seed Labels are meant to provide an easy passage at the border and they are now available at the COMESA Secretariat at \$0.035/label in order to facilitate regional seed trade within the 21 COMESA Member States," Dr Mukuka said in a statement issued in Lusaka on Friday 9 April 2021.

ACTESA, a Specialised Agency of COMESA, manages the Seed Development Programme

which is implemented within the guidelines of the COMESA Seed Harmonisation Implementation Plan (COMSHIP). In line with COMSHIP, the programme has developed the COMESA Variety Catalogue, a platform that contains seed varieties which comply with requirements of having the seed registered in two COMESA Member States. Once a variety is on the COMESA Variety Catalogue, it does not have to be subjected to more tests and can be imported, marketed and, if necessary, produced in any of the 21 COMESA Member States.

The operations of the COMESA Variety Catalogue requires that seed companies certifies that a variety that has been registered officially in two COMESA Member States coupled with data of the variety showing the Distinction Uniformity and Stability (DUS) and Value for Cultivation or Use (VCU) / National Performance Tests (NPT).

Get more details on: <https://varietycatalogue.comesa.int/login>.



Figure 2: Four classes of the COMESA Seed Labels



Figure 3: A roll of COMESA Seed Labels containing 2,000 Seed labels



The COMESA COVID-19 Taskforce Team with the AU-CDC after their meeting at the COMESA Secretariat

COMESA COVID-19 Taskforce Team Discusses Pandemic with African Union

The COMESA Secretariat COVID-19 Taskforce led by Assistant Secretary General for Programmes (ASGP) Amb. Dr Kipyego Cheluget on Tuesday 6 April met representatives from the Africa Union Centre for Disease Control (AU – CDC) to discuss the pandemic and how the Secretariat should plan and prepare to return to work physically.

The Secretariat closed physical operations and migrated to online operations in March 2020 due to the continued escalation of COVID-19 cases in Zambia and the region.

Leading the AU CDC team was the Regional Collaborating Centre (RCC) Coordinator Dr Lul Riek who together with the Infectious Prevention Control (IPC) Focal Point Dr Ariyo Bakare briefed the COMESA team on the different measures and steps that need to be considered before the Secretariat could re-open.

Amb. Kipyego welcomed the delegation to COMESA Secretariat and briefed them on the measures that have been put in place since March 2020. He informed the delegation that the Secretariat has continued to operate smoothly through the Business Continuity Plan (BCP) which is prepared every month followed by the weekly timesheets which reflects approved activities and their implementation.

The secretariat has continued to follow the

COVID guidelines by providing masks, hand sanitizer and internet bundles for the small core staff that operate from the office. The visiting team was informed that all meetings are held virtually, and missions or travel have been put on hold until further notice.

“We have been looking forward to this meeting because we believe you are best placed to guide us to make the right decision regarding re-opening the Secretariat for physical operations,” he added “The Secretariat has performed well using a solid IT system which enables us to communicate, hold meetings and implement regional integration programmes seamlessly.”

The AU-CDC delegation was taken round the offices and surroundings and later held a sit-down meeting with the COMESA team where



Amb. Dr Kipyego Cheluget

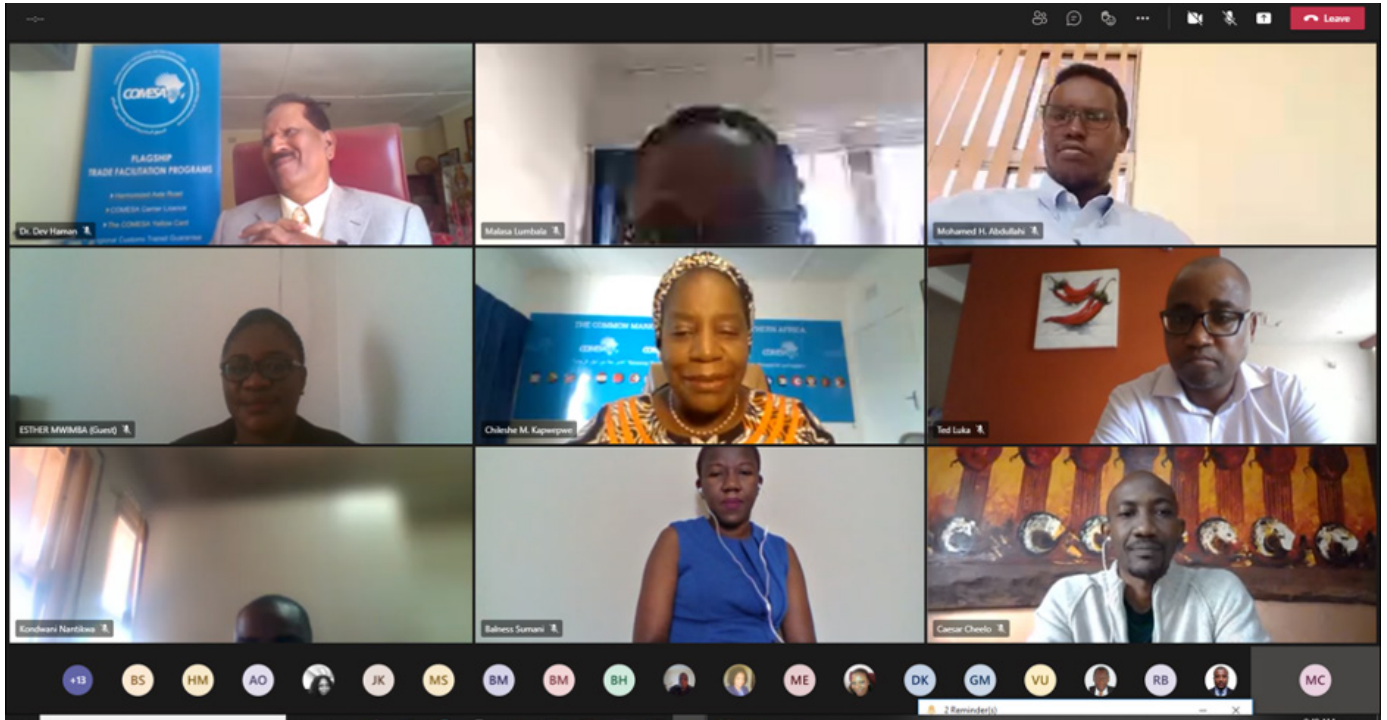
they discussed steps to consider before opening the Secretariat. They are expected to compile a comprehensive report on their visit which will be shared with the Secretariat through the Secretary General.



ASGP Cheluget and selected staff took the AU-CDC Team around the COMESA offices as part of their fact finding mission



New Staff Oriented on COMESA Programmes



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COMESA Secretariat held a two-day successful orientation programme for nine new members of staff who have joined the organisation in different divisions, projects and units. The orientation programme held virtually was also attended by several members of staff who took turns to make presentations about the programmes being implemented by the divisions, units and projects.

Speaking during the opening of the first of its kind orientation programme, Secretary General (SG) Chileshe Mpundu Kapwepwe welcomed the new staff and pointed out that much was expected of them in contributing to the delivery of the COMESA regional integration agenda. She expressed faith that they would rise to the occasion.

"Your appointment confirms the resilience of our recruitment systems and structures which have made it possible for you to take up your appointments at the Secretariat. You are the best talent in the region in your specific areas of technical expertise and I am proud that you have all joined us to contribute to the implementation of the COMESA Regional Integration Agenda enshrined in its Treaty," She added "Having been competitively recruited throughout the COMESA region, you demonstrated the best fit for your respective position, and I am glad to inform you that your appointments were approved by the COMESA Council of Ministers in November 2020," she said.

Ms Kapwepwe informed the new employees that

the COVID-19 pandemic has seriously affected the livelihoods of all people in the region and beyond and she was hopeful that very soon the vaccines would be made available to everyone.

With the help of African Union Center for Disease Control (AU-CDC), the Secretariat is planning to further increase the sharing of information on the pandemic to all stakeholders.

As a way of continuing in the new normal, the SG said the Secretariat has been implementing an interim Business Continuity Plan since April 2020, which has paved the way for the institution to ensure that staff continue to deliver on the mandate of the organization while safeguarding their wellbeing. Compulsory wearing of masks, social distancing and observing of health protocols have proved to be an effective means of combating the spread of COVID-19 and this has worked well for the Secretariat through offsite working arrangements. Several virtual meetings, workshops and Policy Organs meetings have been conducted with Member States and various stakeholders since then.

The Secretariat has undertaken significant work in revising the organisational structure which includes designing a lean organization structure, review of job descriptions and conducting a skills audit. These measures are aimed at ensuring that the organization structure and staffing is fit for purpose. The organization structure will be further rationalized and aligned with the 2021– 2025 COMESA Medium Term Strategic Plan (MTSP),

expected to be approved soon approval.

The new staff were urged to use the probation period to learn as much as they can and adhere to the set staff rules and regulations. As a rule-based organization, Ms Kapwepwe added that governance and accountability are key attributes of the way business is done and the Treaty plays a key role as the guiding document.

Following expiry of contracts of a few Professional staff, the Secretariat conducted the recruitment exercise virtually to timely filling up the vacant positions.

The Assistant Secretaries General for Programmes and Administration and Finance Amb. Dr Kipyego Cheluget and Dr Dev Haman both participated in the orientation programme and encouraged the new staff to contribute positively to the organisation.

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Activities Under the EU-Supported Migration Programme Begin to Roll Out



File: Immigrants

The European Union through the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) has reaffirmed its support to COMESA to enable the Regional Economic Community to have an effective and coordinated management of migration and mobility in the framework of a health crisis. The organization will also help COMESA and its Member States to better communicate with stakeholders at border points during such a crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic situation is one such health crisis that the ICMPD would like to work with COMESA as a practical way of intervening in the migration and health sector.

ICMPD Migration EU Expertise (MIEUX) Focal Point Naike Chancy made this reaffirmation during a virtual meeting between his team and the COMESA Secretariat COVID-19 Task Force led by the Assistant Secretary General for Programmes Amb. Dr Kipyego Cheluget.

Mr Chancy stated that in addition, his organization will work with COMESA to strengthen its capacities and migration authorities in Member States to manage migration and mobility at the borders in the framework of a health crisis.

To kick start the activities, the two teams discussed how the series of online meetings with the Secretariat and Member States will be conducted to assess the training and information needs regarding the management of migration/mobility at the borders during this health crisis of COVID-19.

"The aim of this activity will be to get a better understanding from key stakeholders in order to assess the general context, roles of the stakeholders, existing capacities and needs of the stakeholders, ongoing projects in the region to ensure complementarities," Mr Chancy added.

Dr Cheluget briefed the ICMPD delegation

about activities of the taskforce and measures implemented by the Secretariat since March 2020 when the organisation migrated to off-site operations.

The stakeholders to be contacted may include relevant divisions/units of the COMESA Secretariat, the COMESA Business Council (CBC), the COMESA Federation of National Association of Women in Business (COMFWB), EU Delegation and international organisations implementing projects with COMESA such as International Organisation for Migration and the International Trade Center (ITC).

In addition, meetings will be organised with the relevant authorities of the COMESA Member States involved in the pre-selected pilot border posts in DRC, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe, including border agencies and entities training border officials (training departments/academies); as well as with the local chapters of the COMESA-SADC Cross Border Traders Association (CBTA).

COMESA Diary

| Dates | NAME OF MEETING | VENUE | ORGANIZER |
|---------------|---|--------------------|-------------|
| 13 April 2021 | AfCFTA SG Meets COMESA Secretary General | COMESA Secretariat | Secretariat |
| June 2021 | 21 st COMESA Heads of State and Governments Summit | Virtual | Secretariat |



Photo Focus: COMESA COVID-19 Taskforce Team with Africa Union Centre for Disease Control



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COMESA SECRETARIAT
COMESA Center
Ben Bella Road
P.O. Box 30051



+260 211 229 725



www.comesa.int



info@comesa.int



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