

BREAKING BARRIERS, FACILITATING TRADE

Locations	Egypt, Kenya, Malawi, Sudan, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe
Dates	01/05/2015 - 31/01/2018

Summary

Intra-regional trade is key in promoting economic development and improving food security within East and southern Africa. However, due to higher costs, many countries here are trading more with distant countries. We want to change this and increase the trade in agrifood products within the region. The CABI team will be working with COMESA to review and simplify current measures and barriers to trade.

The problem

Trade within the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) region is currently below its potential with countries trading more internationally than with their neighbours. This is mostly due to the high cost of doing business locally, especially due to the expense of crossing borders. This situation reduces competitiveness and/or profitability and ultimately reduces formal trade. The high costs of cross-border trade within the COMESA region are largely attributable to the way in which the Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures are administered and implemented. For a variety of reasons, administrative procedures across the system are often complicated and lengthy. The inspections and treatments required can also be costly because they are either

duplicated or over-stringent. Because of the high costs in meeting technical requirements, the overall result is that SPS measures are restrictive and act as a barrier to trade.

What we are doing

With this in mind the goal of this project is to increase trade in agri-food products within the COMESA region, to improve food security and foster economic development. The project will review the implementation of SPS measures for selected commodities such as maize, fish and beef on given trade routes to reduce overall trading costs. This will involve adopting risk based measures and reducing the administrative costs to the extent possible, while maintaining or reducing the level of risk.

The project, which is funded by the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), is implemented by COMESA with technical support from CABI. Overall, the project is piloting a number of SPS practices and approaches that help build capacity and foster good practices in SPS in line with the new WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

Ultimately we want to simplify the application of SPS measures, upgrade and harmonize regulatory protocols and develop the necessary institutional and human resource capacities.

All of this will facilitate intra–COMESA trade and will identify good practices and innovative approaches that can be disseminated and replicated elsewhere in COMESA.

Results so far

Implementation agreements have been negotiated with all participating countries and CABI and trade flows between selected countries are being discussed. The ones being considered include: Egypt exporting oranges to Sudan and importing beef from Sudan; reciprocal trade in maize, milk and fish between Kenya and Uganda; Malawi exporting carpenter fish to Zambia and importing maize from Zambia; Zambia exporting maize to Zimbabwe and importing frozen fish from Zimbabwe.

A baseline assessment tool has been developed which collects data and for the first time assesses the costs of trade due to SPS measures (such as tax and inspections). This can be used for a specific commodity crop across a particular border and potential reductions in costs can then be identified.

Following SPS capacity building with front line staff, we hope to demonstrate that costs due to SPS measures have been reduced.

Donors

Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), The Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)

Partners

Ministry of Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development (Zimbabwe), Plant Quarantine and Phytosanitary Services (Zambia), Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (Uganda), Plant Quarantine Unit, Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (Sudan), Plant Protection Directorate (Sudan), Trade and Marketing Unit, Ministry of Agriculture Irrigation and Water Development (Malawi), Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS), Foreign Agricultural Relations Department (Egypt), Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation (Egypt)

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