



ACTESA concludes stakeholder consultations on regional biotechnology/bio-safety policies and guidelines

The Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) has concluded putting together the recommendations of regional stakeholders on harmonized biotechnology/bio-safety policies and guidelines for the COMESA region.

The recommendations came from a two day regional workshop held in Nairobi, Kenya from 19-20 April, 2010. More than 50 participants representing senior government officials and scientists from COMESA member States, the private sector, farmer organizations, regional and international research institutions and the media participated in the meeting.

Other participants were drawn from South Africa, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the United States International Development Agency.

Apart from making recommendations on policy and guidelines, the meeting also defined a bio-safety roadmap and communications strategy for biotechnology and bio-safety in the region.

Dr. Cris Muyunda, Chief Executive Officer of ACTESA, noted that once the agreements reached during the meeting are approved by COMESA Ministers, the COMESA region would have a clear direction on commercial planting of GMOs, trade in GMO produce and how to handle emergency food aid with GM content.

“The journey may be rough and tough, but the region is determined to move from workshops and meetings to actual implementation on the ground”, said Dr. Muyunda in his closing remarks.

A six-point draft communiqué was released at the end of the meeting that included the institutionalisation of a Regional Bio-safety and Centralized GMO Risk Assessment Desk in ACTESA and the crafting of a long-term program to implement the harmonization agenda.

ACTESA, a Specialized Agency of COMESA, dealing with various aspects of agri-business,

development and trading will present the recommendations of the meeting to the upcoming COMESA joint meeting of Ministers of Agriculture and Environment, scheduled for May 20-21 2010 in Swaziland.

ACTESA CEO visits USA

ACTESA CEO Cris Muyunda is headed to Iowa, USA to attend the 7th Annual Bio-safety Institute for Genetically Modified Agricultural Products (BIGMAP) Symposium being held from April 27-30, 2010.

Dr. Muyunda will present a paper on, ‘Seed and Biotechnology Challenges to Seed Trade’ at the symposium whose theme is ‘Food, Feed and Fuel for the World: Seed and Biotechnology.’

His presentation will mainly focus on the opportunities for enhancing regional seed trade and the way forward for implementation.

Concerning biotechnology, Dr. Muyunda will address the emerging trends, including the progress on regional policy harmonization and capacity building of regulatory regimes in the COMESA region.

After the BIGMAP symposium, Dr. Muyunda will proceed to Washington, where he is scheduled to meet various ACTESA partners to discuss ACTESA’s agenda and implementation progress in eastern and southern Africa.

ACTESA commissions an audit study on livestock value chains

In March 2010, ACTESA commissioned a study on the value chains for live animals, meat, dairy products, hides and skins serving the domestic, regional and international markets in six countries of the Horn of Africa sub-region.

The countries are Ethiopia, Somalia, Djibouti, Kenya, Uganda and Southern Sudan.

Four ACTESA consultants contracted to undertake the study met in Kenya to discuss the scope of work and terms of reference of the study, the rationale of the study and the methodology to be employed by the consultants to conduct the study.

The inception report will include maps of study areas as annexes, list of sites and locations to be visited by consultants in each area, tentative lists of stakeholders to be contacted during the study and an initial list of relevant literature to be reviewed by the consultants.

A final livestock audit report is expected by mid 2010.

AAMP plans training for journalists in eastern and southern Africa

The African Agricultural Markets Program (AAMP) is planning a training session for journalists in eastern and Southern Africa under the theme, 'The role of the media in fostering effective agriculture commodity marketing and trade policies.'

The training aims to contribute to improved media coverage on agricultural issues and policy by increasing journalists' knowledge and understanding of the role and functioning of agricultural markets and how government policies impact markets.

The objective of the training is to develop knowledge and understanding of the role and functioning of agricultural markets among journalists in the region.

This knowledge and understanding will help journalists to identify the stories of significance, drive to the heart of the story, offer informed explanation and analysis, and ask searching questions of public officials and policy makers.

ACTESA will co-host this event with the Agricultural Council of Tanzania. The venue will be Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania and the proposed schedule is the fourth week of June, 2010.

Business reporters, business editors and feature writers from the print and radio media are the targeted participants.

Meanwhile, the AAMP is also planning its fourth policy seminar and training course under the topic, 'Risk Management in African Agriculture: Taking Stock of What Has and Hasn't Worked.'

The objective of this event is three-fold:

(a) to discuss the underlying policy rationales and implementation challenges of various risk management instruments;

(b) to draw lessons from experiences with various risk management methods and identify the best practices;

(c) to conduct training on the key analytical

concepts, highlighting their strengths and limitations using country case studies.

ACTESA will co-host this event with the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security in Malawi.

The venue will be in Lilongwe, Malawi and the proposed schedule is 30th August to 5th September, 2010.

ACTESA identifies opportunities to promote agricultural trade

ACTESA CEO, Cris Muyunda has identified key areas that need priority investments to promote regional agricultural trade in eastern and southern Africa.

Dr. Muyunda was speaking during the April 6-9 2010, Regional Agriculture and Food Security Forum in Livingstone, Zambia.

The forum, hosted by the World Bank, International Finance Corporation (IFC) and the European Union is being held to facilitate discussions on enabling private sector led agricultural development with government support in the Southern Africa Region.

Dr. Muyunda identified the areas that need priority investments in order to promote agricultural trade as increasing productivity, creating strong partnerships with the World Food Programme (WFP) market programmes, incorporating innovative technologies and focusing on specific commodities that support the livelihood of the region.

ACTESA's focus commodity groups include, cereals and pulses; roots and tubers, oilseeds, livestock and fisheries; forest and natural resource products; horticulture; tree crops and agricultural inputs.

Dr. Muyunda said there is need to address some structural constraints in the region that are preventing producers from fully taking advantage of the opportunities and available regional markets.

He said ACTESA would table concerns that needed addressing to the Ministers of Agriculture and parliamentarians in the region, as part of its comprehensive strategy to tackle issues faced by small scale farmers.

Dr. Muyunda noted that agricultural growth is pertinent as it is the best way to reduce poverty.

He said the key elements for a green revolution in the region include focus on small-holder farmers, Integrated farming systems, improved harvesting, storage and processing, value chain enhancement and improved access to credit and markets.

Others are Sustainable Land Management and climate mitigation, capacity building, research and extension as well as land access and tenure security.