

ACTESA to upscale AGOA activities

In its quest to ensure eligible COMESA member States benefit more from the African Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA), the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) is committed to assisting countries to share lessons on approaches for succeeding in the United States market.

ACTESA Chief Executive Officer, Cris Muyunda, speaking at the Zambia AGOA breakfast planning meeting indicated that there are commodity opportunities and actions where, more could be done to achieve meaningful impact in the short term.

Dr. Muyunda noted that Malawi, Kenya and Ethiopia were some of the countries that had fared well in AGOA and their experiences could be used to help other countries to succeed as well.

Dr. Muyunda highlighted organic products among others as those that could be pursued for export to the US.



ACTESA CEO with Bill Jackson and Phil Nervig

Earlier, Dr. Muyunda had discussed collaborative actions with the Director of African Affairs from the United States Trade Representative, Bill Jackson, and Phil Nervig of the US Embassy in Zambia.

ACTESA Plans its fourth Stakeholder Forum

Preparations for the fourth Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) Partner and Stakeholders' Forum, which will be held from 9th – 11th November 2010 in Entebbe, Uganda have reached an advanced stage.

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During the meeting, cooperating partners of ACTESA, national and regional farmer organizations, trade associations, governmental officials and other key stakeholders will deliberate on important trade and development priorities.

ACTESA will facilitate critical and important discussions on agricultural policies, commodity trade and producer capacity building issues.

In particular, the November meeting will focus on the following:

- ✍ The impact of the five country clusters promulgated by COMESA;
- ✍ ACTESA's 10 year draft Strategy;
- ✍ ACTESA's new partnerships and initiatives.

Further, prior to the Forum, ACTESA, in collaboration with COMPETE, a United States Agency for International Development (USAID) supported program and other partners, will host the Regional Staple Foods Trade Workshop, on 8th November, 2010. After the ACTESA Forum, on 12-13 November, the Eastern Farmers Federation (EAFF) in partnership with CTA will hold its regional collaborative meeting.



COMRAP graduates 16 Swazi Agro-dealer trainers of trainers

The COMESA Regional Agro-inputs Programme (COMRAP), implemented by ACTESA, has trained 16 trainers of trainers in agro-development, in Swaziland.

The Training of Trainers Workshop (TOT) was held from September 16-23, 2010, and was officially opened by Dr. Robert Thwala, Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Swaziland. He was accompanied by the under secretary, Mr. Bongani Masuku, the financial controller, Mrs. R Semilane, and the Chief Executive Officer of the Regional Excellence and Development Initiative (REDI), Dr. Sikhomba Gumbi.

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COMRAP, funded by the European Commission (EC) Food Facility, conducted the first of a series of intense Training of Trainers (TOT) Workshops in Lusaka, to train identified agro-dealer trainers from Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Uganda, from 6th to 13th September, 2010.

In his official address to the participants, Dr, Thwala emphasized the need for Swaziland to improve its food productivity to the levels of the 1970s when the country was self sufficient in food production. He commended the European Union (EU) for providing the resources for the program and urged the participants to take full advantage to ensure that farmers are able to access inputs.

And speaking on behalf of the ACTESA CEO, the agro-dealer training coordinator, Mr. Ken Shawa thanked the Government of the Kingdom of Swaziland for officiating at the occasion and for supporting COMRAP activities. He congratulated participants and encouraged them to work hard so as to achieve the objectives set out for them.

The overall objective of the COMRAP project is to contribute to improving rural food security and livelihoods in the COMESA region through training and capacity building of national and regional input providers. One of the results that ACTESA expects to achieve through COMRAP is to strengthen agro-dealer networks and support output trade for key value chains.

Indian rice investors visit the region

Rice investors from India last week visited the ACTESA Secretariat to discuss rice development in the region, particularly in Uganda and Zambia. Dr. Ram Chaudhary and Mr. Modugula Reddy from Terragold Agri Plc and Neha International Limited, had meetings with ACTESA CEO, Dr. Cris Muyunda and other ACTESA officers, to also discuss implementation ideas agreed to in the MOU, that ACTESA signed with Terragold in August, 2010.

Further, ACTESA facilitated the duo to meet with relevant stakeholders on the promotion of rice farming. Consequently, Neha Int intends to sign MOUs with investment promotion agencies in the region that will focus on promoting rice development and cultivation.

ACTESA is focused on promoting structured trade in staple crops and rice is one of the commodity staples targeted for expansion in linking farmers to markets and enhancing rice processing systems in the region.

Currently rice productivity in the ESA region is only a third of the global average at 1.12 MT/ha compared to 3.84 MT/ha global average and far behind the global best of 10 MT/ha.

APITRADE AFRICA APIEXPO 2010

Following the request by COMESA Ministers of Agriculture in July 2010 for ACTESA to upscale its activities in the honey sector, ACTESA will, in partnership with the private sector in the region, host the APITRADE AFRICA APIEXPO 2010, under the theme, 'The role of honey in attaining food security in Africa,' to be held in Zambia from October 26-29, 2010.

The Expo will showcase the top honey packers, service providers, equipment suppliers and innovative beekeeping initiatives in the region. The Expo is tailored to encourage excellence across the value chain and link African honey processors and exporters to buyers from developed markets.

The event will also have an exhibition of beekeeping equipment, innovative projects and high value bee product brands.

COMRAP holds weather index trainings

COMRAP held a weather index awareness training of business executives from September 22-25, 2010 in Kampala, Uganda.

The training workshop was officially opened by Dr Charles Mukama, from the Ugandan Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. Mr. Sonnyboy Shongwe represented the ACTESA CEO, Dr. Cris Muyunda.

The course content covered, agricultural insurance products, weather index based insurance products, model assumptions, data and information requirements, and key contracts parameters.

The output of the weather index trainings being carried out by COMRAP aim to:

- ✍ Create and disseminate clear awareness messages on weather index insurance;
- ✍ Format weather data into a form suitable for product design;
- ✍ Understand and undertake product design process;
- ✍ Design dry day based contracts with little assistance from external and international consultants;
- ✍ Perform analysis of climate change effects on product pricing.

COMRAP held a similar training for Malawi from 13-17 September 2010

The use of weather index insurance as a risk management tool by banks and other agriculture lenders is quite restricted mainly by lack of weather infrastructure in key agriculture areas and lack of local product design and pricing capacity in insurance companies and banks.

Therefore, COMRAP aims to help address these key challenges through a needs assessment and development of local capacity in designing weather index insurance contracts.



ACTESA CEO met with Catherine Ichoya, FEMCOM Executive Director to discuss gender issues.