

Africa CDC, COMESA to Collaborate on Promoting Safe Trade



Deputy Director, Africa CDC, Dr Ahmed Ouma (front 2nd left), Dr Kipyego Chelugot (front 2nd right) and staff of their respective institutions during the joint meeting at the COMESA Secretariat in Lusaka.

Discussions between the Africa Center for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC) and COMESA are on course to establish useful collaborations on healthy trade during and post Covid-19. The envisaged partnership will include provision of technical support on public health to trade facilitation initiatives to protect lives and livelihoods.

The initiative is in line with Africa CDC's Mission to support Member States' public health initiatives and strengthen the capacity of institutions to detect, prevent, control and respond quickly and effectively to threats of disease, man-made conflicts and natural disasters.

Africa CDC Deputy Director, Dr Ahmed Ouma, who was on a visit to COMESA Secretariat, Monday, 7 December 2020, said regional organizations in Africa have institutions capable of responding to the

current and emerging challenges such as those associated with Covid-19 pandemic. What was lacking is harnessing their synergy based on their comparative strengths.

"Our capacities are not talking to each other," Dr Ouma noted. "We need to harness them for effective response."

As a result, he said, CDC has developed guiding principles on how to open up borders safely and allow people to move freely

The initiative is in line with Africa CDC's Mission to support Member States' public health initiatives and strengthen the capacity of institutions to detect, prevent...

and conduct trade across various regions of the continent. CDC has also initiated a campaign to open up Africa for trade with three objectives: minimizing the number of infections, opening up economies to continue to grow and ensuring that learning institutions in the continent are opened.

The collaboration with COMESA will be on trade related issues to ensure harmonized messaging across the region and capacity building on health.

"As trade guidelines are developed and implemented across the region, Africa CDC would like to be involved to ensure public health measures are incorporated to prevent likelihood of possible diseases transmission through trade," Dr Ouma said.

The meeting agreed on the need to work in partnerships that cut across member States noting that joint initiatives are easily

facilitated with resources than solitary approaches. Among the interventions proposed is COMESA's support to Member States in manufacturing good quality products for health responses for internal trading to avoid overreliance on foreign supply chains.

CDC expressed interest to participate in COMESA policy organs meetings to advise on public health matters in policy making. CDC

will also identify a focal point to coordinate activities with COMESA, including capacity building, given that the latter does not have health experts.

Assistant Secretary General Dr Kipyego Cheluget, who led the COMESA team said COMESA will invite the participation of the CDC in the next policy organs meetings.

He informed the CDC team that COMESA

has already conducted a study on the socio-economic impacts of the Covid-19, which will be shared shortly. Further, that a joint meeting of technical staff will be organized to work out the modalities of collaboration.

Africa CDC is a public health agency of the African Union established to support the public health initiatives of Member States and strengthen the capacity of their health institutions to deal with disease threats.

Yellow Card has Settled Over \$1m Insurance Claims



The COMESA Motor Vehicle Insurance Scheme paid out over \$1.1 million in compensation claims to road accident victims caused by visiting and foreign motorists to the region for the period July 2019 to June 2020.

According to a status report presented to the recent COMESA Council of Ministers meeting, 967 claims were reported to the Scheme with 298 paid. A total of 613 claims were outstanding which is a significant decrease in claims compared to 874 claims reported during the previous period and 393 paid.

At the same time, over 208,000 Yellow Cards were issued and a Gross Premium Income of \$12.3m recorded, showing a decrease of 1.12% and a growth of 10.16% respectively. This compares to over 210,000 Yellow Cards issued in 2019 and a premium income of \$11.1 million.

The COMESA Yellow Card is a Third-Party Motor Vehicle Insurance Scheme launched

in 1987 and is currently operational in 13 countries including Tanzania, a non-COMESA country. Over 200 insurance companies in the region are participating as subsidiary participants to the Scheme.

The main objective of the COMESA Yellow Card Scheme is to facilitate the movement of vehicles, goods and persons by providing, at least minimum guarantees of a compulsory third-party motor vehicle insurance as those required by the laws in force in the territories of the visited Member States.

Currently, the Yellow Card is being issued in South Africa and Mozambique to motorists traveling to the COMESA region under the B2B (Business to Business) arrangement with insurance companies in third countries. This initiative of expanding the Yellow Card Scheme beyond the COMESA region is expected to continue.

The Council of Ministers appreciated that the Yellow Card Scheme is now being implemented by Mozambique and South

Africa, which are non-COMESA Members.

The Council urged the Kingdom of Eswatini to commence operations of the Yellow Card scheme.

Meanwhile, over 975 Regional Customs Transit Bonds (RCTG) amounting to \$318 million were executed for the period July 2019 to June 2020. During the same period over 316, 000 Carnets were issued for transfer of goods in the Northern and Central Corridors which is an increase compared to US\$317.3m worth of Carnets issued the previous year.

About 1, 037 Clearing and Forwarding Agents and 50 Insurance companies were participating in the operations of the RCTG Carnet recording claims of over \$514, 000 the highest ever for a single RCTG Bond claim.

The report also indicates that COVID-19 has had a negative impact on the Yellow Card and RCTG with slight reductions recorded.



COVID-19 Worsening Debt in Countries



Most countries in Sub-Saharan Africa which includes the COMESA region need to prioritize medium term policies such as structural transformation and economic diversification of individual economies, reforms in revenue mobilization and increase trade integration to deal with the worsening debt situation caused partly by the COVID-19 Pandemic.

According to a special report authored by Senior Economist at the COMESA Monetary Institute, Dr Lucas Njoroge, the long term, policy priorities should be on ensuring that the debt plays a meaningful role and must be used for revenue generating activities that increase the productive capacity of the economies of the region.

In the report titled 'Implication of COVID-19 Pandemic on Debt for Sub-Saharan African Countries' Dr Njoroge says:

"Countries should borrow smarter, understand their real needs, ensure good terms and effective management of their debt while holding creditors to higher standards on transparency and sustainability."

The report adds that African countries must ensure proper evaluation of the returns of the projects to a certain economic viability, technology and skills transfer and building local capacity to operate the projects in the long term. Fiscal stimulus targeting public health, crisis response and income support to the most vulnerable for the countries that are still severely affected by the pandemic should continue.

"However, for countries that have managed to bring the pandemic under control, it will be important to start unwinding some of the fiscal measures that had been put in place to support lives and livelihoods," says the report. "This will help reduce pressure on government finances, thereby release resources to support aggregate demand."

Further, the report states that saving lives and protecting livelihoods especially now when the second wave of the pandemic seems to be more aggressive and vicious, should be among the immediate policy priorities. Countries should continue with public health efforts including contact tracing, quarantine, isolation and treatment.

Dr Njoroge notes that debt in most Sub-Saharan African countries was already increasing before COVID-19 though the pandemic has worsened the situation. The slowdown in economic activities following partial or full lockdowns and general economic slowdown are all exerting considerable pressure on government finance. This has led to most governments running wide fiscal deficits that are slowly translating into increasing debt and debt distress.

Dr Njoroge concludes that it will be crucial during this time for States to leverage on the African Continental Free Trade Area to strengthen value addition and industrial growth to manage the debt crisis. (Full report on <https://www.comesa.int/special-reports/>)

Need to Reboot the CADDP Commitments for Food Security

Majority of COMESA Member States are not on track towards achieving the goals and aspirations of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP). This has prompted the COMESA Council of Ministers to urge Member States to further integrate the Malabo Commitments into their National Agriculture and Food Security Investment Plans (NAAIPs) and allocate more resources to support the implementation.

Further, countries should prioritize more initiatives to end hunger and reduce poverty through agriculture and allocate more resources to accelerate progress towards building the climate resilience of the region's agri-food systems.

Sitting in their 41st Meeting on 26 November 2020, the Council noted that the Secretariat has continued working with a multiplicity of regional, continental and global institutions to guide public and private investments in agriculture, natural resources, trade and food security in the COMESA region. The aim is to contribute to the realization of the goals and aspirations of the CAADP Malabo Commitments on achieving accelerated agricultural growth and transformation for shared prosperity and improved livelihood.

The Council also noted that while most of the Member States made progress between the first CAADP (2017) and second (2019) biennial cycles, majority of the Member States are not on track towards achieving the commitments by 2025.

During the same meeting, the Secretariat was directed to strengthen engagement with development and strategic partners including the private sector to leverage financial and technical resources to fast-track the implementation of CAADP Malabo commitments.

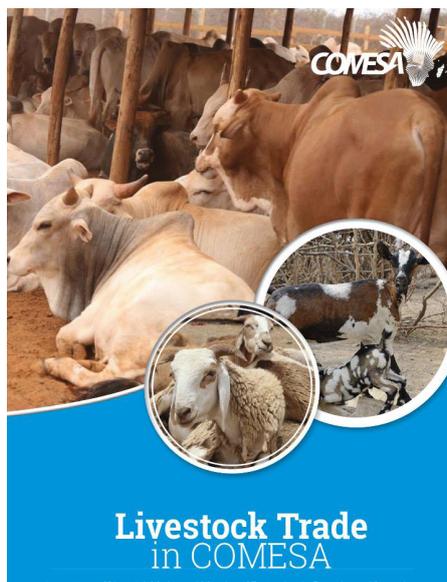
COMESA Develops Key Policies for Livestock and Fisheries

COMESA has developed three key policies to help the growth of the livestock and fisheries sector once Member States adopt them. The policies were developed with the full involvement of the Member States, the Secretariat, international institutions, other regional organisations and cooperating partners.

These are: COMESA Livestock Policy Framework, Manual for the Harmonized Grading and Classification of Cattle, Goats and Sheep for Meat and the Ecosystem-Based Fisheries Management.

In view of this, the Council of Ministers has urged Member States to adopt the policies and allocate more resources to livestock and fisheries development and utilization of veterinary laboratories for diagnosis of COVID 19.

The Council further directed the Secretariat to support Member States and mobilise resources for implementation of the livestock policy



framework. This is in addition to financing implementation of the Reinforcing Veterinary Services in COMESA and enhancing participation of small-scale fisheries in the blue economy

development in COMESA.

In its meeting on 26 November 2020, the Council appreciated the successful collaboration between COMESA and Member States veterinary and animal production authorities, regional economic communities, African Union and global organizations and the key achievements. These include the development and validation of Regional Livestock and Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy Frameworks.

The Secretariat has also supported Member States to formulate their livestock development policy, strategy and regulations, rolling out of the Animal Resource Information System (ARIS) and development of harmonized grading and classification of cattle, sheep and goats for meat; and mapping of enterprises in exporting and importing countries.

Countries Urged to Adopt Climate Change Resilience Framework

COMESA countries have been urged to adopt the Regional Climate Change Resilience Framework and use it as a guide to develop their own national resilience frameworks. In addition, they should endorse the regional body, COMESA, as their delivery partner to have a harmonised regional approach.

This was one of the decisions of the recent Council of Ministers meeting conducted on 26 November 2020. According to the Ministers, Member States should also allocate more resources to Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) development and for management of soils and land degradation.

The Ministers directed the Secretariat to develop an implementation plan for CSA and mobilise resources for the Resilience Framework and to support up-scaling of CSA best practices in more Member States.

The effects of climate change in the region are observed in terms of erratic weather, droughts, floods, cyclones, rising sea levels with their greatest impact is on water, food



File /effects of climate change

and energy security; damaged infrastructure, forced migration among others.

Hence, the Council noted that the scarce resources tend to be diverted to deal with its consequences/disasters and less on the adverse effects of climate change

particularly on women, children and the poor who are more vulnerable.

Most Member States have weak technical and institutional capacities that continue to hamper the effective climate actions at the national and regional levels.

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