



ACTESA REGIONAL 10 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

“2021-2031”

**“BOOSTING INTRA-REGIONAL AGRICULTURAL TRADE THROUGH SUPPORT OF
SMALL-SCALE FARMERS’ ACCESS TO AGRICULTURAL INPUT, OUTPUT AND
FINANCIAL MARKETS”**





ACTESA

'A Specialised Agency of COMESA'

ACTESA REGIONAL 10 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

"2021-2031"

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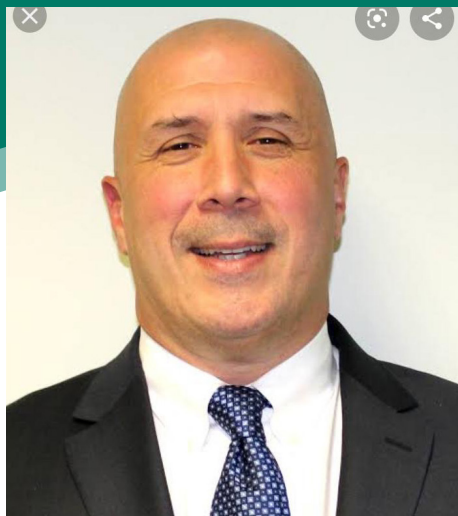
Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAMP	Africa Agricultural Markets Programme
AATF	African Agricultural Technology Foundation
ACTESA	Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa
AFAP	Africa Fertilizer and Agribusiness Partnership
AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Area
AFSTA	African Seed Trade Association
AGRA	Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa
AKP	ACTESA Knowledge Portal
ASARECA	Association for Strengthening Agricultural Research in Eastern and Central Africa
AU	African Union
AU-IBAR	The African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CAADP	Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme
CET	Common External Tariff
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CIMMYT	International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre
CIP	International Potato Centre
C-MRF	Commodity Mutual Recognition Framework
COMBIP	COMESA Biotechnology Implementation Plan
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
COMMAF	COMSHIP Mutual Accountability Framework
COMRAP	COMESA Regional agro-Inputs Programme
COMSHIP	COMESA Seed Harmonization Implementation Plan
COMSIS	COMESA Seed Information System
DFAT	Australian Government's Department of Foreign affairs and Trade
DfID	Department for International Development
EAC	East African Community
EAFF	East African Farmers' Federation
EAGC	East African Grain Council
ESA	Eastern and Southern Africa
EU	European Union



FARNPAN	Food, Agriculture and Natural Resources Policy Analysis Network
FBOs	Farmer Based Organisations
FEMCOM	Federation of National Associations of Women in Business in Eastern and Southern Africa
FEWSNET	Famine Early Warning System Network
GBC	Grain Bulking Centre
GMO	Genetically Modified Organism
HIV-AIDS	Human Immune Virus–Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
IFDC	International Fertilizer Development Centre
ILRI	International Livestock Research Institute
IPPSD	Investment Promotion and Private Sector Development
IAD	Industry and Agriculture Division
ISAAA	International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications
JFPI	Joint Fertilizer Procurement Initiative
LLPI	Land Policy Initiative
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MTSP	Mid-Term Strategic Plan
NEPAD	New Partnership for Africa’s Development
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NTB	Non-Tariff Barrier
OP	Operational Plan
RDOAG	Regional Development Objectives Grant Agreement
RECAMP	Regional Enterprise Competitiveness and Access to Markets Programme
ReNAPRI	Regional Network of Agricultural Policy Research Institutes
ReSAKSS	Regional Strategic Analysis and Knowledge Support System
RFBS	Regional Food Balance Sheet
RFBS	Regional Food Balance Sheet
SACAU	Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SOPs	Standard Operating Procedures
SPS	Sanitary and Phytosanitary
TAAT	Technologies for African Agricultural Transformation
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASAA	Women in Agribusiness in Sub-Sahara Africa Alliance
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WRS	Warehouse Receipt System
ZBIDI	Zambia Banana Industrialization Development Initiative

FOREWORD BY ACTESA BOARD CHAIR-PERSON



Mr. Jason Scarpone, ACTESA Chair

It is my honour and pleasure to present to you the ACTESA Regional Strategic Plan 2021-2031 that was endorsed and approved by the ACTESA Board during its Inaugural Board Meeting on 19th May 2021. In this Strategy, ACTESA has emphasized results and impact in staple food production and market enhancement for the nearly 90 million smallholder farmers in the COMESA Region. The Strategy shall contribute to COMESA's vision on agriculture of increased integration and improved regional competitiveness of staple foods markets across the Eastern and Southern Africa region, leading to broad-based inclusive growth and increased food security.

Following the challenges faced and achievements made in its first ten years, ACTESA, now in the next ten years, shall concentrate on the following:

- Private sector-led programmes from formulation to implementation.
- A re-orientation within the African Union (AU) Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) priority areas of market access and food security
- Applying a regional cluster market approach in its programming and market intelligence in monitoring staple food status;
- Working with ACTESA Alliance Partners in implementing staple food programmes efficiently and effectively.



We are hoping that this will be more impactful and bring about the following results:

- Improved planning and coordination with key ACTESA Alliance Partners Stakeholders;
- Enhanced policies that support regional market integration;
- Improved policies that support staple food trade;
- Increased facilities and services required for improved integration and regional competitiveness of staple foods markets;
- Improved access to services that enhance the production of staple foods;
- Strengthened capacity of regional farmer organisations to engage in market-oriented production;
- Improved smallholder farmers' linkages and access to input and out market facilities.

ACTESA will continue to engage its Alliance Partners, namely COMESA Member States, Implementing Partners, Farmers Organisation, Development Partners, and Donors in line with the ACTESA Strategic Plan for 2021-2031. These Public-Private Partnerships are key to ACTESA contributing to a growth rate of 10% per year in inter-regional agricultural trade for the next ten (10) years.

I look forward to working together to build sustainable agri-products markets and ensuring household food security in the 21 COMESA Member States.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT BY ACTESA CEO



Dr. John Mukuka, Interim ACTESA CEO.

In this new ACTESA strategy for the period 2021-2031, impact and results on the ground shall be the focus of ACTESA Staple Food Programme Development and Implementation. Within the region where 85 percent of all staple crop producers are smallholders and of these, only about 15 percent produce for the market and are characterized by poor organization with no predictable selling mechanisms, means ACTESA's role in this 10-year strategy is to reverse these constraints. To achieve these results, ACTESA shall employ the following approaches and instruments:

- ACTESA will support country- led efforts and country investment plans in line with the CAADP existing national structures,;
- Alignment to CAADP priority areas II and III on market access and food security respectively;
- Country Clusters or Market Sheds in contiguous sub-groups of countries within COMESA Member States.
- Implementation through partners of broad range of stakeholders to establish Public-Private-Partnerships (PPPs)

These approaches and instruments shall only be achieved through the alliance-based orientation of ACTESA as a COMESA Specialised Agency. We would like to thank USAID,



EU, DFID, AGRA, Australian Government's Department of Foreign affairs and Trade (DFAT), World Bank, World Food Programme (WFP) and other development partners who were key in the implementation of initial ACTESA Staple Food Programmes in the period 2009-2020. Critical in this strategy, is the use of market intelligence in the monitoring and implementation of ACTESA Staple Food Programmes.

We shall continue working with other development partners in making staple food trade operational in the COMESA region in these two pillars of the ACTESA Strategic Plan 2021-2031:

- Increasing agricultural productivity of staple crops in the COMESA region through harmonised seeds, fertilizer, biotechnology, biopesticides/ bioprotectants policies, etc
- Support small-scale farmers access to national, regional and international markets through development of regional food balance, harmonisation of Warehouse receipt system, harmonisation of staple food grades and standards, harmonisation of agricultural commodity exchanges, etc.

We would also like to thank Farmers Organisations of SACAU and EAFF, Member States, COMESA Secretariat and Implementing Partners that have worked with ACTESA in the last 10 years and I am confident ACTESA shall remain a COMESA Institution through which Alliance Partners shall continue to channel inputs from the agricultural private stakeholder sector to the COMESA Policy Organs for staple food policy development and implementation. In this way ACTESA shall deal with practical solutions to the region's agricultural challenges including market access related constraints, low productivity, technological and policy related constraints through its alliance partners.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The ten-year **ACTESA Strategic Plan 2021-2031** is the revitalization strategy of the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA), stemming from the previous strategy covering the period 2011-2020 approved by the COMESA Council of Ministers in 2011. The strategy shall strive to boost intra-regional agricultural trade through supporting small-scale farmers access to agricultural input, output and financial markets. ACTESA's vision, mission, goal and core value remains essentially the same as follows:

Vision: To realise a robust, modern and prosperous regional agricultural sector within which all stakeholders have a high standard of living.

Mission: Integrate smallholder farmers into domestic, regional and international markets through an improved policy environment, expanded market facilities, services and capacity building.

Goal: To ensure increased integration and improved regional competitiveness of staple foods markets across the Eastern and Southern Africa region leading broad-based inclusive growth and increased food security.

Core Value: To nurture a strategic and inclusive partnership that brings together and

The following were key ACTESA staple food interventions with relation to input and output market harmonisation as directed by the COMESA Council of Ministers between 2011 and 2020:

- Adopted the COMESA Seed Trade Harmonisation Regulations; and decided that Member States should support the domestication of the COMESA Seed Trade Harmonisation Regulations (2013);
- Adopted the COMESA policy on Biotechnology and Biosafety taking into account the sovereign right of each Member State. In addition, ACTESA/COMESA should support Member States to implement the policy through communications and outreach, development of operational guidelines and establishment of regional biosafety risk-assessment structures.
- The Ministers adopted the COMESA Joint Fertiliser Procurement Initiative (JFPI) (2013)
- ACTESA establish a Fertilizer Financing Facility comprising a set of financial instruments to spur rural transformation through investments in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) working along the fertilizer value chain (2015);
- ACTESA provide at least 500 enterprises with African Fertilizer Agribusiness Partnership (AFAP)'s Agribusiness Partnership Contracts (APCs) that will allow for sustained business and technical support over the next 2-3 years in all COMESA Member States starting in 2015;
- ACTESA continue developing and expanding the Eastern and Southern Africa Fertilizer Trade and Investment Platform for: (a) sustained dialogue between the public and private sector regarding key policy and regulatory issues affecting the performance of fertilizer markets in the region; (b) facilitation of regional fertilizer trade; and (c) increased private sector investment and engagement in the fertilizer industry (2015);
- ACTESA establish an extensive network of trained and accredited agro dealers to improve the availability and accessibility of fertilizer to smallholder farmers (in particular, women and youth) in the region (2015);
- Encourage member states to support the implementation of the COMESA fertilizer policy and regulatory framework to facilitate fertilizer trade and investment; and encourage Member States to adopt the Fertilizer Marketing and Distribution Programme (2015);
- COMESA/ACTESA in collaboration with UNECA should establish a regional programme that will focus on addressing the bottlenecks identified in the regional Livestock and Maize value-chains (2015)

- ACTESA to develop a COMESA-wide Regional Food Balance Sheet (RFBS) by 2017.
- Member States are requested to support the existence of the ACTESA Revival Steering Committee at COMESA secretariat tasked to revive ACTESA and coming up with ACTESA draft Revival Strategy covering the period 2021-2031 (2019);
- Member States are requested endorse new ACTESA Board Members (2020);
- ACTESA Board Members are urged to Mobilize Resources for the Implementation of ACTESA Programmes (2020).

However, the following were challenges experienced in the implementation of the ACTESA Strategy of 2011-2020,

- Low and undiversified resource base where most programmes were donor-driven
- ACTESA did not operate on private sector and business-driven model in its programming;
- Lack of financial contribution from COMESA Member States in the support of its core-staff positions and implementation of its programmes;
- To some extent lack of visibility and communication strategy in which case ACTESA was designed to function as a regional information and knowledge management hub.

In view of the above, the ACTESA Strategic Plan 2021-2031 shall then define the focus and approach adopted by ACTESA Alliance Partners in order to achieve better development effectiveness and results towards its vision of realising a robust, modern and prosperous agricultural sector in the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) region. The strategy draws from, and builds upon ACTESA's original design plan, Strategic Plan 2011-2020 experiences and lessons learnt from implementing ACTESA programmes and also the ACTESA Revival Strategy of 2019. Extensive consultations across the spectrum of stakeholders like the ACTESA Advisory Committee and Stakeholder Forum and development partners (WFP, FAO, USAID, DFID and EU) revealed in particular for greater focus on results, more selectivity in areas of engagement and rigor in implementation. To this end, the strategy has identified the operational, sector and thematic priorities where interventions and actions will be most relevant and most likely to produce tangible results in the performance of the agricultural sector regional value chain actors in ESA in close collaboration with COMESA Agriculture and Industry Division.

The Strategic Plan highlights the key regional challenges of policy inconsistencies, inefficient markets, capacity limitations and poor technology adoption as the main constraints of the agricultural sector in the ESA region- a region where poverty levels are still high and with 25% COMESA Member States being food insecure as of 2020 representing a population

of 123 million people out of total population of 650 million (22.8 percent in sub-Saharan Africa). The Plan captures the focus of ACTESA's innovative approaches for value addition at regional level and staple food trade expansion that ensures that smallholder farmers are included in the market integration agenda. The focus on smallholder farmers, who are roughly 80 million, emphasises ACTESA's commitment to contributing to the achievement of the United Nations (UN) Millennium Development Goal Number One of halving poverty and hunger by 2025, and to CAADP's goal of agriculture-led development. ACTESA's core value confirms that the Alliance will pursue an aggressive partnership agenda that will bring together all the development partners and regional stakeholders, who share the common goal of revitalising the agriculture sector for improved food security and broad-based economic growth.

The ten-year ACTESA revised Strategic Plan 2021-2031 shall be different from the previous one in the following perspective:

- It will apply programmatic approach and not project focus with all programmes private sector led from formulation to implementation;
- Decentralise and devolutionalise its scope taking into consideration country-specificities of each Member States;
- Increase and diversify funding source in line with the Resource mobilization and sustainability strategy including development of business plans of existing programmes like COMSHIP;
- Re-orient its programmes within CAADP priority areas of market access and food security
- Apply regional cluster market approach in its programmes;
- Emphasis on facilitation and co-ordination role of ACTESA instead of implementation of programme by itself at country level with rolling out programmes at national level led by national partners.

ACTESA shall still have three strategic focus areas for which it will solicit and allocate resources:

- delivering comprehensive and evidence-based policy findings and improving the policy environment for investment and agricultural trade;
- providing market linkage support, easing smallholder farmers access to, and strengthening market services and facilities;
- building capacity for the commercialisation of smallholder farmers.

Selective support will also be given to the development of essential infrastructure, and linking agricultural initiatives, particularly in a market context, to establish emerging development corridors in order to enhance investment opportunities in food processing and other value-addition industries.

In terms of geographic coverage, the initial efforts of ACTESA will target the 21 COMESA Member States and thereafter expand to all African countries in line the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) aimed at achieving the deepening regional integration in Africa in accordance with agenda 2063; creating a continental customs union, liberalizing intra-Africa trade, resolving the challenges of overlapping member ships of RECS, enhancing competitiveness, contributing to movement of capital and natural persons and facilitating investment, promoting sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development, gender quality and structural transformation and promoting industrialisation.

In undertaking work within the three strategic focus areas, ACTESA seeks to achieve the following key results:

- Improved planning and coordination with key stakeholders;
- Enhanced policies that support regional market integration;
- Improved policies that support staple food trade;
- Increased facilities and services required for enhanced integration and regional competitiveness of staple foods markets;
- Improved access to services that enhance production of staple foods;
- Strengthened capacity of regional farmer organisations to engage in market-oriented production and;
- Improved smallholder farmers' linkages and access to input and out market facilities.

ACTESA will seek to achieve a growth rate of 10% per year in inter-regional agricultural trade for the next ten (10) years through concerted efforts targeting agricultural productivity for the major staples in the region, namely maize, beans, bananas, cassava, rice, livestock, fisheries and dairy. Productivity increases would be driven by implementation of previous and existing programs that will assist the region to double fertilizer and improved seed utilisation in line with COMSHIP, while increasing area under small-scale driven drip irrigation from current levels of 5-9 percent to above 30 percent by 2031. A review of this plan would allow ACTESA to target more ambitious but achievable results for the 2021-2031 period with more focus on pragmatic approach in its programming.

To ensure appropriate monitoring and evaluation of the above targeted results, ACTESA will adopt a clear indicator and results framework that will be refined over time. Further, in the execution of this strategy, ACTESA has recognised the importance of crosscutting themes such as farmer driven capacity building, climate change, resilience and adaptation strategies, gender, nutrition, HIV/AIDS and good governance at local level. These will be significantly mainstreamed in all operational activities in line with COMESA sector specific policies. Additionally, special emphasis will be placed on private sector development through capacity building initiatives, to allow the emergence of a more robust private sector in the agricultural sector, while fostering effective private-public partnerships to influence

policy changes and achieve economic growth and development.

In seeking to achieve its targeted results, ACTESA will use the following programme approaches and instruments:

- Implementation through existing national structures, ACTESA will support country- led efforts and country investment plans in line with the CAADP to accelerate progress in the development of agriculture;
- Alignment to CAADP priority areas II and III on market access and food security respectively;
- Country Clusters or Market Sheds in contiguous sub-groups of countries, ACTESA will focus on removing obstacles to the development of market sheds by strengthening the capacity of governments, farmers and business actors to plan and initiate programs to develop trade and integrated value chains within the country clusters created by the regional economic communities, particularly COMESA;
- Implementation through partners of broad range of stakeholders to establish Public-Private-Partnerships (PPPs) to implement policy changes and support the development and implementation of a wide array of programs that seek to improve staple food markets;
- Coordination as lead role of the Secretariat of taking leadership in coordinating advocacy and interventions aimed at improving regional agriculture markets, the commercialisation of smallholder farmers and their integration in these markets;

Key programmes in moving forward shall include existing ones or those that are low hanging fruits namely:

1) Increasing agricultural productivity of staple crops of the COMESA region

- Support seed companies trading using COMESA Regional Seed Labels and conduct registration, annual renewal of COMESA varieties on the COMESA Variety Catalogue in line with COMESA Seed harmonisation Implementation Plan (COMSHIP);
- Support COMESA Biotechnology and Implementation Plan (COMBIP) in Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan where Bt cotton has been officially approved and support regional biosafety assessment co-ordination through establishment of the COMESA Panel of Experts on Biotechnology and Biosafety (PoE) and finally Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SoP) for the Regional Biosafety Risk Assessment Mechanism;
- Undertake Harmonization of Policies and Regulations framework for Bioprotectants in 21 COMESA Member States enabling acceleration of

their registration, technology transfer, commercialization, and use for the benefit of small-holder and commercial farmers, food / feed processors and consumers.

- Harmonisation of fertilizer policies / regulations, standards, quality assurance and market development in the COMESA Member States and thereafter establish a finance mechanism for bulk manufacturing and procurement of fertilizers and distribution in the COMESA Member States
- Support to national governments as they design evidence-based policies that encourage staple food trade; promoting advocacy aimed at realizing policy reforms in favour of small-holder farmers, translating policies into action, and monitoring their impacts; building needed capacity at both the national and regional level while developing analytical capacity to enhance policy advocacy efforts.
- Develop ACTESA Stakeholder Mappings and regional staple food market intelligence system
- Harmonisation of livestock feed in the COMESA region.
- Support existing regional value chains in cassava, banana, maize, cotton, niche crops (small grains and legumes), livestock (beef, poultry, and dairy) and fisheries so that national and regional markets can be accessed.
- Training and support to enhance adoption of technologies such as drip irrigation, promotion of climate-smart varieties within COMSHIP with COMESA Climate Change programme and agricultural water management technologies for increased productivity especially in resource endowed but underutilized areas.
- Support for use of agriculture productivity enhancing options such as conservation farming, carbon trading, biotechnology through GMO cotton iii) support for extension by enhancing the capacity of farmer organisations and adoption of extension models such as training of lead farmers to serve as focal points for information dissemination.

2) **Support small-scale farmers access to national, regional and international markets**

- Comparative competitiveness benchmarking of national business environments among ESA member states through analysis and empirical client satisfaction surveys;
- Analysis of key sectors across intra-regional markets in ESA and comparative analysis of ESA regional markets against alternative export sources in viable export destinations for selected staple foods.

- Strengthen and facilitate the development of existing farmer associations to enhance their capacity to engage in the staple food value chains and improve their participation in national and regional markets.
- Consolidate and disseminate innovative/best practices and lessons that integrate smallholder producers into commercial markets (initial focus on aggregation, warehousing and contract farming, etc.)
- Harmonisation of Warehouse Receipt System (WRS) for staple commodities;
- Develop a COMESA Regional Food Balance Sheet (COMESA RFBS) to enhance establishment of credible and reliable agricultural food security information system and re-launch the ACTESA Knowledge portal. Facilitate the establishment of dialogue platforms at national and regional levels in providing oversight on food balance sheet and informal cross border trade monitoring.
- Enhance private sector and smallholder farmers' capacity to comply with regional and international market standards for staple food trade.
- Creation of service forums to develop and disseminate best practices and lessons learned for the development of key facilities and public-private partnership services supporting commercialization of staple food production.
- Support for grain bulking through formation of farmer groups and grain bulking centers
- Establishment of a production and marketing development forum;
- Harmonisation of grades and standards for staple food commodities and in the process establish a COMESA regional agricultural commodity exchange on spot and futures exchanges to link small-scale farmers to national, regional and international markets within the COMESA-EAC-SADC tripartite framework and later AfCFTA;

In moving forward and in order to sustain itself, ACTESA shall derive the following strategies within its Resource mobilization and Sustainability Strategy:

- Grants from focused, results-based and flagship programmes dealing with harmonisation and implementation of agricultural input and output market access e.g. COMSHIP in close collaboration with development partners in the COMESA Member States with possibility of private sector thereafter taking over to ensure sustainability. In view of this, a Grants Manual should be developed with position for Grants Officer entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring and supervising the sub-grantees.
- ACTESA being a COMESA Member State Institution should have a core funding / membership fees by Member States to support core-positions of

the ACTESA Secretariat management positions in the first 5 years;

- Membership fees by Alliance Partners to be agreed at the ACTESA Stakeholders Forum as a way of supporting ACTESA sustaining its programmes;
- Registration fees for ACTESA's especially the General Assembly/stakeholder forum)
- Service delivery of input, output and financial markets (brokering, facilitative and information sharing role, linking partnerships);
- Product delivery and information services (statistical data, analytical reports (e.g. competitiveness);

With mobilized financial and human resources, ACTESA shall strive to achieve the following in the short and medium-term period (2021-2026):

- Develop an ACTESA Operational Plan (OP) for the period 2021-2026
- Revise and finalise ACTESA Resource mobilisation, sustainability strategy including business plans for already implemented programmes
- Revise and finalise Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Strategy
- Conduct ACTESA Stakeholder Mapping and Management System
- Revise and finalise Communication and Visibility Strategy
- Revise and finalise Human Resource Management
- Revise and finalise ACTESA Financial and Procedure Manuals
- Establish ACTESA Programmes Design Manual
- Conduct a Re-Launched ACTESA Annual Stakeholders Forum

In its sustaining of programmes, ACTESA shall work with alliance partners that include private sector actors (staple food and seed traders), governments, farmer organizations, trader organizations and agricultural-based NGOs to deliver inclusive impact-oriented programs in the region. The alliance partners are already in existence at national and regional level and they will assist in catalysing and support the achievement of tangible results and contribute to the development of the value chain in areas that relate to policy, markets and trade expansion as well as stakeholder capacity building.

A key component of the ACTESA sustainability shall be private sector paying for the documentations in the staple food trade, for example seed companies paying for having their varieties on the COMESA Variety Catalogue and in the utilisation of the COMESA Regional Seed labels and Certificates. This model shall be used for other ACTESA programmes specific business plans. Through these mechanisms, ACTESA shall continue to leverage its unique position in the ESA region to deliver positive developments within

the staple food sector. As a regional framework supported and approved by the COMESA Authority, ACTESA shall continue to facilitate joint action and work consistently in partnership with other organisations and institutions to maximise development impact, improve harmonisation and alignment of interventions targeted to smallholder farmers.

ACTESA's critical role in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) will be in the regional value chains that could exploit economic of scale, lower production and marketing costs and assist in removing non-tariff barriers. It will also assist in establishing regional value chains that shall also provide opportunity to the countries in the COMESA region to link gainfully into the global value chains system and increase their bargaining power with the lead firms. Other contributions of ACTESA in the AfCFTA include:

- Increased competitiveness of firms in Africa and boosting of intra-African trade and investment
- Improved business and investment climate that attracts foreign direct investment and fosters linkages between foreign and local firms
- Participation of small and medium-sized enterprises in electronic driven regional and global value chains
- Development of agriculture and agribusiness implications for rural development
- Supporting informal traders in formalizing their trade matters for regional integration in Africa, as such a transition provides Governments with much needed tax revenues that can be used to finance regional integration programmes and compensate for lost tariff revenues under tariff liberalization.

ACTESA provides an answer to the region's agricultural challenges including market access related constraints, low productivity, technological and policy related constraints. It is an important institution in a region where 85 percent of all staple crop producers are smallholders and of these, only about 15 percent produce for the market and are characterized by poor organization with no predictable selling mechanisms. ACTESA's role in this 10-year strategy is to reverse these constraints.



1.0 GENERAL BACKGROUND

The establishment of the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) was in response to the 2003 Maputo Declaration by African Union (AU) which required the need for coordinated and comprehensive public and private investments in the agricultural sector commonly known as Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Program (CAADP) where agricultural sector support increased to 10% of the total national budget. This was meant to ensure practical implementation of CAADP and as well contributing to attainment of the then Millennium Development Goal 1 (MDG) 1 which seeks to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2030.

In view of the above, COMESA Ministers of Agriculture at their meeting in Victoria, Seychelles between 14th and 15th March 2008, recommended the formation of ACTESA in line with the aspirations of the CAADP as being an Africa wide initiative to ensure that it plays its rightful role as an engine of agriculture development and critical in enhancing food security. ACTESA was established and modeled within a framework of Public Private Partnership (PPP). This was intended to provide a framework for long-term partnering relationships between the public (COMESA) and private (Alliance) sector to deliver services (CAADP Pillars II and III). It is an approach that COMESA adopted so as to increase private sector involvement in the delivery of CAADP Pillars II and III Strategic Focus Areas. This is in line with the CAADP principles of private and civil society sector participation and the involvement of beneficiaries (citizens).

Its mandate is to address regional food security challenges through improved competitiveness of staple food markets in the Eastern and Southern Africa (ESA) region. ACTESA's commodity focus includes cereals and pulses; oil seeds; horticulture; roots and tubers; tree crops; forestry products; livestock and agricultural inputs.

In this regard, ACTESA was officially launched on 24th September 2008, in Livingstone, Zambia and was subsequently formally established on 9th June 2009, by the COMESA Heads of State and Government as a Specialized Agency of COMESA in line with article 182 of the COMESA Treaty. ACTESA's creation was aimed at boosting intra-regional agricultural trade through support of small-scale farmers' access to agricultural input, output and financial markets. ACTESA's commodity focus includes cereals and pulses; oil seeds; horticulture; roots and tubers; tree crops; forestry products; livestock and agricultural inputs.

ACTESA is currently focused on common agricultural trade issues that include learning, capacity building, harmonization and coordination which require a regional institution and are expected to have impact on all COMESA Member States. The key areas of focus assigned to ACTESA include:

- The development of regional agricultural policies
- Promotion of investments in agriculture
- Promotion of trade in agro commodity products and development of production and marketing structures
- Development of the agricultural, livestock, pastoral and fisheries sectors and consultation with the private sector and civil society organisations on agricultural development matters especially agro commodities trade.

By creating ACTESA, the African member states identified the need to put in place a mechanism that would address the specific needs and requirements of small farmers to access markets for their produce through a participatory approach involving all major stakeholders thus ensuring practical implementation of CAADP goals at the regional level.

In view of the above, ACTESA fast-tracks and catalyse activities and programmes aimed at:

- Improving competitiveness and integration of staple foods markets through improved micro and macroeconomic policies as the drivers of staple food markets;
- Improving and expanding market facilities and services for staple foods commercialisation to facilitate growth in staple food markets; and
- Increasing commercial integration of staple food producers into national, regional and international markets to promote growth in food staples.

Since its inception, ACTESA's efforts have been focused on the development and harmonisation of regional agricultural policies, promotion of trade in agricultural commodities and facilitating policy dialogues that support the establishment of effective public-private partnerships. ACTESA's major highlight was to secure representation on the COMESA Trade and Customs Committee as well as the Agriculture Ministers Committee.

This will ensure high level commitment and support to the development of the staple food sector within the ESA region.

Evidence in 2019 confirms that the global level of the prevalence of undernourishment has remained virtually unchanged in the last three years, at a level slightly below 11 percent. The absolute number of people suffering from hunger, however, continues to increase, albeit slowly. More than 820 million people in the world are hungry today in Africa, underscoring the immense challenge of achieving the Zero Hunger target by 2030. Hunger is on the rise in almost all subregions of Africa, where the prevalence of undernourishment has reached levels of 22.8 percent in sub-Saharan Africa. In Africa almost 260 million people in 2018, with more than 90 percent living in sub-Saharan Africa.

A broader look at the extent of food insecurity, beyond hunger, shows that 17.2 percent of the world population, or 1.3 billion people, have experienced food insecurity at moderate levels. This means that they do not have regular access to nutritious and sufficient food – even if they are not necessarily suffering from hunger, they are at greater risk of various forms of malnutrition and poor health. The combination of moderate and severe levels of food insecurity brings the estimate to 26.4 percent of the world population, amounting to a total of about 2 billion people. Hunger is on the rise in almost all African subregions, making Africa the region with the highest prevalence of undernourishment, at almost 20 percent.

In the COMESA region, staple food production has declined in the last 5 years and food insecurity has been reported in most COMESA member States. The food security situation in the COMESA member States in the period 2019 and 2020 is as in figure 1. The production of staple foods in Africa is dominated by 80 million smallholders in the COMESA region and 90 percent of them are staple producers' smallholder farmers. Less than 10 per cent of the world's smallholder farmers have access to the improved, quality seeds that can halt hunger and tolerate impacts of climate change and other environment stresses. Whereas agricultural production has grown at an average of 2 percent in the COMESA region, the population growth rate is 3.5 percent per year, the situation that has led declining per capita food production.

Table 1: Staple food production and food security in some COMESA Member States in the period 2019/20

COMESA Member State	Staple Food production status
Burundi	The 2019 aggregate cereal production is put at about 326 000 tonnes, similar to the 2018 output and about 10 percent above the average of the previous five years.
Egypt	The 2019 cereal production is forecast at 22 million tonnes, about the same as in 2018, but about 6 percent below the average due to the decline in rice production as the Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation continues to set limits on the area planted with rice to save water.
Eswatini	The 2019 maize crop was harvested in May and production is estimated at 95 000 tonnes, 16 percent below the previous year's high level, but still 10 percent above the five-year average. Nearly 232 000 people, about 25 percent of the rural population, are projected to be food insecure and in need of humanitarian assistance during the October 2019-March 2020 period.
Ethiopia	Harvesting of the 2019 main "Meher" season crops is well underway and production prospects are generally favourable. In western key-producing areas of Benishangul Gumuz, western Amhara and western Oromiya regions, the June-September "Kiremt" rains were up to 30 percent above average, with a positive impact on yields.
Kenya	Despite improved rains between mid-April and late May, according to FAO's Agricultural Stress Index System (ASI), severe drought was still affecting between 20 and 45 percent of the cropland in late May in most areas of the "maize basket". Significant rainfall deficits were also recorded in several central medium potential cropping areas and in most southeastern and coastal marginal agriculture livelihood zones.
Madagascar	In the southern regions, including the rainfed paddy-producing districts in Anosy and Ihorombe, rainfall has been erratic and seasonal totals have been well below average, hindering crop development. Consequently, paddy yields in these areas are forecast to be below average in 2020. Harvesting of the 2020 maize crop is underway and the output is forecast at a below-average level.
Malawi	<p>Production of other cereal crops, mainly rice and sorghum, was also estimated at above-average levels as favourable weather conditions boosted the area planted and yields. Overall, cereal production in 2019 is estimated at 3.7 million tonnes, 12 percent above the five-year average.</p> <p>Top of Form</p> <p>Bottom of Form</p> <p>the number of food insecure people in the November 2019-March 2020 period is estimated at 1.9 million people, about 40 percent below the high level of the previous year.</p>

Mauritius	The production of food, mainly vegetables and fruits are estimated to be 35 percent above the level of the corresponding period in 2018. Production of paddy, the principal cereal produced in the country, increased on a yearly basis, mostly on account of favourable weather conditions that boosted yields. The 2019 production of sugarcane, a significant export earner, is estimated at a belowaverage level, mostly reflecting a reduced planted area. The sown area to sugarcane has steadily decreased since 2016, mainly driven by lower international demand for sugar. the imports of cereals are estimated at a nearaverage level of 310 000 tonnes.
Rwanda	The cereal production is put at about 733 000 tonnes, about 3 percent up from 2018 and 12 percent above the average of the previous five years.
Tunisia	Preliminary forecasts for the 2019 cereal production point to a bumper cereal crop of almost 2.2 million tonnes, over 55 percent above the 2018 weather-stricken harvest and over 40 percent above the average. For the 2019 harvest, about 700 000 hectares were planted with wheat and 620 000 hectares with barley, compared to 620 000 and 525 000 hectares, respectively, planted in 2018.
Uganda	Total cereal production for 2019 is put at about 3.5 million tonnes, about 2 percent below the average output obtained in 2018.
Zambia	Planting of the 2020 crops finalized in December 2019 and the harvest is expected to start in April. The country is to produce 3,387,469 MT of maize 69% more than in the 2018/19 season and staple crop production at 4.5 million tonnes.
Zimbabwe	Production of cereals in 2019 was estimated at a well belowaverage level of 944 000 tonnes due to unfavourable weather conditions. In order to increase imports, the Government lifted the ban on imports of Genetically Modified (GM) grains in December 2019, introducing the rule that grains must first be put into quarantine before being milled into flour.

In view of the above, the creation of ACTESA was aimed at contributing to the eradication of hunger in the COMESA region and making sure that markets are created by the commodity traders and in the process, this would trigger increase in productivity and harmonisation of grades and standards for the staple crops. Since its inception, ACTESA’s efforts have been focused on the development and harmonisation of regional agricultural policies, promotion of trade in agricultural commodities and facilitating policy dialogues that support the establishment of effective public-private partnerships.

In the implementation of the ACTESA programmes, most of the COMESA Council of Ministers key decisions that are still relevant in the new ACTESA Regional Strategic Plan 2021-2031 as detailed in annex 4.0. Key among them include the following:

- Adopted the COMESA Seed Trade Harmonisation Regulations; and decided that Member States should support the domestication of the COMESA Seed Trade Harmonisation Regulations (2013);
- Commended the Member States that have domesticated the seed trade regulations; and encouraged other Member States that have not yet completed or initiated the domestication to fast-track the process (2020);

- Adopted the COMESA policy on Biotechnology and Biosafety taking into account the sovereign right of each Member State. In addition, ACTESA/ COMESA should support Member States to implement the policy through communications and outreach, development of operational guidelines and establishment of regional biosafety risk-assessment structures;
- ACTESA reconstitute the COMESA Panel of Experts (PoEs) on biotechnology, biosafety and develop a database for risk assessment subcommittees; Support resource mobilisation and initial activities of COMBIP including establishment of the Panel of experts on Biotechnology and biosafety (PoE); Prepare a regular Biotechnology and Biosafety Status Report for the COMESA Region (2020);
- The Ministers adopted the COMESA Joint Fertiliser Procurement Initiative (JFPI) (2013);
- ACTESA establish a Fertilizer Financing Facility comprising a set of financial instruments to spur rural transformation through investments in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) working along the fertilizer value chain (2015);
- ACTESA provide at least 500 enterprises with African Fertilizer Agribusiness Partnership (AFAP)'s Agribusiness Partnership Contracts (APCs) that will allow for sustained business and technical support over the next 2-3 years in all COMESA Member States starting in 2015;
- ACTESA continue developing and expanding the Eastern and Southern Africa Fertilizer Trade and Investment Platform for: (a) sustained dialogue between the public and private sector regarding key policy and regulatory issues affecting the performance of fertilizer markets in the region; (b) facilitation of regional fertilizer trade; and (c) increased private sector investment and engagement in the fertilizer industry (2015);
- ACTESA establish an extensive network of trained and accredited agro dealers to improve the availability and accessibility of fertilizer to smallholder farmers (in particular, women and youth) in the region (2015);
- Encourage member states to support the implementation of the COMESA fertilizer policy and regulatory framework to facilitate fertilizer trade and investment; and encourage Member States to adopt the Fertilizer Marketing and Distribution Programme (2015);
- COMESA/ACTESA in collaboration with UNECA should establish a regional programme that will focus on addressing the bottlenecks identified in the regional Livestock and Maize value-chains (2015);
- ACTESA develop a second phase of the Regional Food Balance Sheet Programme by 2015;

- ACTESA to develop a COMESA-wide Regional Food Balance Sheet (RFBS) by 2017;
- Council of Ministers adopted ACTESA Charter (2014);
- Member States are requested to support the existence of the ACTESA Revival Steering Committee at COMESA secretariat tasked to revive ACTESA and coming up with ACTESA draft Revival Strategy covering the period 2021-2031 (2019);
- Member States are requested endorse new ACTESA Board Members (2020);
- ACTESA Board Members are urged to Mobilize Resources for the Implementation of ACTESA Programmes (2020).

CHALLENGES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTESA STRATEGY OF 2011-2020

Dwindling resources from the COMESA partner states and change in priorities from development partners limits the ability of ACTESA to meet her mandate. More so economic changes and shrinking donor space and funding priorities require robust actions. There is need for strategic thinking with the current partners on how best to address the matter including formulating a sustainability strategy to enable ACTESA continue playing a leading role in ensuring food security and poverty free Africa. The following were challenges experienced in the implementation of the ACTESA Strategy of 2011-2020:

- Low and undiversified resource base where most programmes were donor-driven ;
- ACTESA did not operating on a private sector and business-driven model in its programming;
- Lack of financial contribution from COMESA Member States in the support of its core-staff positions and implementation of its programmes;
- Lack of visibility and communication strategy in which case ACTESA was designed to function as a regional information and knowledge management hub.

ACTESA would need to primarily generate its own funds in which case donor funding will be taken as additional resource for the institution to expand and widen its operations. This would require that ACTESA begins to engage some of the private sector entities, such as development and commercial banks to jointly implement some of its programs of raising the productivity of smallholder farmers and linking them to markets.

Therefore, this ten-year ACTESA Strategic Plan 2021-2031 defines and guides towards a full and efficient realisation of ACTESA's vision towards a modern and prosperous agricultural sector. ACTESA need to generate revenue from trade facilitation of inputs (seeds, fertilizer, animal feeds, pesticides, veterinary drugs, etc) and output markets (fertilizer bulk procurement, seed companies regional certification, regional commodity exchange, etc).

As in annex 1, the ACTESA core values and principles shall remain the same and shall build on capacity building framework of ACTESA as conducted by Africa Lead in 2016 (Annex 3).

This Strategic Plan provides the strategic focus and a coherent framework to capitalise on emerging opportunities and guide ACTESA's operations and support activities over the next 10 years. While ACTESA's strategic focus presents a new programme approach, the Plan builds on various ongoing activities and new initiatives which require:

- the development of new programme interventions and programme specific business plans;
- increased resources for programme support and implementation;
- policy amendment, and institutional reorganisation for effective management;
- introduction of new operational procedures; and
- capacity development for ACTESA stakeholders, recruitment and capacity building ACTESA Secretariat staff.

The ACTESA's Ten-Year Strategic Plan (2021-2031) shall still focus on three focus interventions:

- Policy development and implementation with the aim of boosting competitiveness of the staple food sector through improved policy environment where ACTESA proposes activities centering on analysis of regional competitiveness, promotion of domestic and regional trade standardization, support for implementation of regional input and output trade regulations and policies including advocacy and public awareness creation of its programmes.
- Market facilities and trade expansion focusing improving and expanding market facilities and services for staple food commercialization with primary activities that includes strengthening regional service fora, establishment of regional agricultural commodity exchanges dealing with inputs (seed, fertilizer, herbicide, pesticide and veterinary drugs) , improving provision of information on food security, status of food balance sheet and expanding financial services for smallholders.
- Capacity building for commercialization aimed at increasing commercial integration of staple food producers into national, regional and international markets where ACTESA proposes activities aimed at the commercial transformation of smallholder producers, increasing the quality and volume of marketable surpluses, and development of farmer-led associations.



2.0 CHALLENGES STAPLE FOODS PRODUCTION AND TRADE IN THE EASTERN AND SOUTHER AFRICA (ESA) REGION

The staple food sector provides the greatest opportunity for realising food security in the region. However, numerous challenges affect the development of this sector and limit its potential to meet the regional staple food demand. The critical factors affecting the performance of the staple foods sector include:

2.1 Low Productivity

Within the ESA region, staple food production is characterised by low production per unit area, causative factors include: low and limited use of appropriate inputs, particularly low yielding varieties and fertilisers; declining soil fertility; and poor agricultural support services. Furthermore, climate change, especially droughts, floods and shifting rain patterns have dampened agricultural productivity. Consequently, total factor productivity has grown by only about 50 percent over the past quarter century. Average annual productivity per hectare and per farmer ranges between US\$60 and US\$120, in the region. Average yields in the region for the main food commodities have hovered around 1 metric ton over the past 20 years compared with 2 to almost 3 metric tons for the average developing countries. Unless there is a deliberate effort toward the reversal of the downward trend in agricultural productivity and output, it will be impossible for the region to harness the full potential of agriculture to reduce hunger and poverty by 50 percent by the year 2025.

2.2 Unco-ordinated and Weak Markets

Staple food markets across the region are fragmented, poorly integrated, and characterised by institutional and infrastructure inefficiencies. Further, services and facilities are not adequate to support and stimulate staple food trade expansion. Other barriers include lack of harmonised commodity standards, limited market information and product differentiation. These factors inhibit staple food trade expansion and integration in the

regional value chains. This pattern is consistent with the semi-subsistence poverty traps hypothesis, wherein poor farmers lack the assets to produce marketable surpluses and therefore cannot reap the considerable gains attainable from market-based exchange, which limits their ability to accumulate (or borrow) assets, reinforcing the initial condition and generating a low-level dynamic equilibrium (Carter and Barrett, 2006). Investments in building up institutional and physical infrastructure at community and regional scale appear unusually important in addressing such entry barriers. Aggregate supply response to induced changes in transactions costs are likely to exceed those to price policy in many rural areas for the simple reason that inducing increased market participation by the large share of producers not presently engaged in markets appears the greatest prospective source of untapped marketed staple food grains supply in the region (Renkow et al., 2004).

2.3 Weak Policy Environment

The development of the staple food sector is characterised by internal and domestic policies and external policy constraints. Regionally, export bans, market and price controls, tariffs, lack of harmonised input markets and non-tariff barriers continue to block opportunities for intra-regional trade expansion. Policies that reduce marketing costs for both households and for traders who intermediate between local rural markets and international and national markets, as well as interventions to expand uptake of improved technologies and increase the stock of productive assets controlled by smallholders, are thus essential complements to traditional trade and price policies for policymakers wishing to stimulate food-grains supply, reduce poverty among smallholders, or both.

2.4 ACTESA' role in addressing regional staple food trade challenges

Research has shown that less than ten percent of these farmers produce primarily for the market, while 50 to 60 percent of them sell a substantial part of their crops at harvest, only to buy it some of it back later in the season, inevitably at higher prices. Very few smallholders are effectively organized and so lack mechanisms for integrating into better developed marketing systems that would provide viable options and more predictable prices. These smallholders on average sell between 500 and 1,500 kilos per sale, while buyers are often looking for from ten to one hundred metric tons (mt) daily of predictable quality commodities. Gearing up supply systems to meet market demands is a major challenge, and hence ACTESA fits in to deal with this gap.

In addition, most of the COMESA Member States depends on primary agriculture commodities for trading with other countries, as 30% of COMESA 21 COMESA Member States Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is contributed by agriculture. In fact, more than 250 million Africans remain food insecure and therefore placing agriculture at a crossroads. Whereas agricultural production has grown at an average of 2 percent, the population growth rate is 3.5 percent per year leading to declining per capita food production. If agricultural output grows at a rate below that of population growth, agriculture's contribution to meeting the regions food needs remains ineffective and ACTESA' creation is to reverse this trend. ACTESA 's original mandate was to deal with value addition in agriculture through enhance market access and capacity building through commercialization. In the last two seasons

of 2017 and 2019, most of the COMESA Member States have experienced food deficits and a regional food balance situation analysis was lacking as current stock of staple crops was simply unknown.

The renewed focus on agriculture and agribusiness, as priority sectors for spurring economic growth in Africa calls for developing value-chains that integrate producers and markets to make the agricultural sector more responsive to consumer demand. The value-chain approach builds on conditions in the consumer market and emphasizes the interface, linkages, and segments that connect the final product demanded by consumers all the way to agricultural commodities produced at the farm level. This market driven approach to formulating investment plans, public policies, and partnerships to integrate smallholder farmers can bring about the significant changes being sought in Africa's agriculture and agribusiness sectors.

Staple food markets across the region are fragmented, poorly integrated, and characterised by institutional and infrastructure inefficiencies. Further, services and facilities are not adequate to support and stimulate staple food trade expansion. Other barriers include lack of commodity trade standards, limited market information and product differentiation. These factors inhibit staple food trade expansion and integration in the regional value chains. The development of the staple food sector is characterised by internal and domestic policies and external policy constraints. Regionally, export bans, market and price controls, tariffs, lack of harmonised SPS measures and non-tariff barriers continue to block opportunities for intra- regional trade expansion. The operations of ACTESA recognised that staple foods are key to ensuring food security in the ESA region.

However, numerous factors including, limited access to market services and facilities and poor policy environments constrain the development of the staple food value chain. These factors undermine the potential to meet the regions food demands. The mitigation of these factors will help to shape ACTESA's response and sharpen its focus and specific contribution to the regional food security agenda.

In view of the above, role of ACTESA in the COMESA Member States cannot be overemphasized.

2.5 ACTESA's Role in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

The unveiling of the Agreement establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) at the Kigali Summit in 2018, and its subsequent launch in Niamey in 2019 is a historic opportunity which paves the way for African countries to boost trade with each other which will in turn drive the economic growth and development of the Continent. The drive for a Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) was given an impetus and was anchored on the progress made by three RECs, the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), East African Community (EAC) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) which came up with a Tripartite Free Trade Area which was launched on 10 June 2015 in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt at the Third Tripartite Summit of the 26 Member States. With half of Africa united under the COMESA-EAC-SADC Tripartite FTA, the other half of

Africa - ECOWAS, ECCAS and AMU - could have come together in an FTA of their own for an eventual merger of the two to make a Continental FTA.

Much has been done towards realising this dream and the Agreement, which have variously been described as a 'game changer' and will connect and expand markets for trade in goods and services on the Continent and thereby grow intra-African trade while at the same time deepening the integration of the Continent. The wider objectives of this comprehensive and mutually beneficial trade agreement among the Member States of the African Union are:

- In the context of boosting intra-Africa trade and realizing the transformational potential of increased trade among African countries, the AfCFTA will create a freer market for goods and services and thus pave the way for accelerating the establishment of the Continental Customs Union;
- To enhance competitiveness at all levels and more specifically at the industry and enterprise level through exploiting opportunities for scale economies, reducing business costs, market access and better reallocation of resources including through the development of trade-related infrastructure;
- To overcome dependence on exportation of primary products and promote social and economic transformation for inclusive growth, industrialization and sustainable development in line with Agenda 2063;
- To resolve the challenges of multiple and overlapping memberships and expedite the regional and continental integration processes;
- To realize the potential to expand and accelerate the growing diversification and dynamism of intra-African trade including the aim to increase trade among African countries through better harmonization, coordination and implementation of trade liberalization and facilitation regimes and instruments across the Continent.

It is recommended that the rules of origin should remain simple, transparent, predictable and trade-facilitating to enable their implementation. Implementation is essential for rules of origin systems to enable firms to reap the benefits of integrated markets through tariff concessions. The closer the rules of origin of the AfCFTA are to existing systems, the less effort will be required to implement and explain to businesses the new rules of origin. Capacity-building, the adoption of new technology and the establishment of an effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism to track progress on rules of origin implementation will be necessary to ensure that preference utilization is high and that the objectives of the AfCFTA. Understanding the role played by all stakeholders is also essential to ensure an appropriate continental policy response. These require institutional and implementation mechanisms for collaborative and inclusive continental policymaking in the Continental Free Trade Area.

In summary, AfCFTA aims to achieve the deepening regional integration in Africa in

accordance with agenda 2063; creating a continental customs union, liberalizing intra-Africa trade, resolving the challenges of overlapping member ships of RECS, enhancing competitiveness, contributing to movement of capital and natural persons and facilitating investment, promoting sustainable land management, inclusive socio-economic development, gender quality and structural transformation and promoting industrialisation.

In the AfCFTA, phase 1 shall concentrate on trade in goods and services. Once complete, negotiation attention will be in phase 2 on investment, competition and intellectual property. Currently 90% of the tariff are fully liberated and zero-rated and up-to 7% of the 377 tariff lines will be treated as sensitive goods. 100% of the 5,387 tariff lines will be at 0% (ITC, 2018). Agriculture accounts for 25% of the Africa GDP and so developing regional value chains for strategic agricultural commodities is essential to AfCFTA's success, as they can assist exploit economies of scale, lower production and marketing costs.

The Common External Tariff (CET) within the AfCFTA's will result in expansion of trade making ACTESA role critical in agricultural provision of primary commodities. This also is in line with COMESA FTA signed in 2000 that provide regional integration and promotes economic growth such as rules-based trading system, a level playing field, including the region moving towards a common external tariff and a customs union, harmonised standards, NTB observatory, open investment policies and national treatment and existence high level of advocacy and "champions". Current studies show that overall gains from tariff eliminations in the continent are quite modest while bulk of the gains shall stem from the reduction in NTBs. Model simulations from a sectoral perspective shows that manufacturing and agriculture shall be key drivers of estimated income changes for the vast majority countries. Once NTB reduction is also taken into account, tax revenue increases for virtually all countries, as the modest revenue losses from import tariff removal are more than offset by increase in overall revenues due to increased consumption and income.

ACTESA's critical role will be in the regional value chains that could exploit economic of scale, lower production and marketing costs and assist in removing non-tariff barriers (UNCTAD, 2018). As most COMESA Member States export primary commodities, ACTESA's role will be key in the facilitation of input supply chain in the COMESA region to stimulate productive synergies within the continent and ultimately stimulate intra-Africa trade. It will assist in establishing regional value chains that shall also provide opportunity to the countries in the COMESA region to link gainfully into the global value chains system and increase their bargaining power with the lead firms.

Other potential gains of ACTESA contribution to AfCFTA include:

- **Increased competitiveness of firms in Africa and boosting of intra-African trade and investment:**

Under the assumption that tariffs and non-tariff barriers will be reduced more quickly for members of regional economic communities and members in Africa, compared with non-members, such tariff and non-tariff barrier reductions should benefit intra-African trade

by giving companies in Africa a boost to their competitiveness. New markets in Africa will be created for African firms, as long as, inter alia, they are able to benefit from preferential trade margins compared with foreign competitors, highlighting the crucial role of the enforcement of rules of origin.

- **Improved business and investment climate that attracts foreign direct investment and fosters linkages between foreign and local firms:**

Improvements in the business and investment climate, matched by stronger State support for entrepreneurs, could attract a larger volume of foreign direct investment and offer opportunities to local firms to engage in equity and non-equity forms of investment with foreign firms.

- **Participation of small and medium-sized enterprises in electronic driven regional and global value chains**

Gains can accrue to SMEs in Africa, provided their insertion into regional value chains is facilitated by targeted public policies within SME development strategies. Electronic commerce can provide an additional development opportunity for SMEs in Africa, if countries in Africa improve their electronic readiness.

- **Formalising Informal cross-border trade and reduced illicit trade**

Supporting informal traders in formalizing their trade matters for regional integration in Africa, as such a transition provides Governments with much needed tax revenues that can be used to finance regional integration programmes and compensate for lost tariff revenues under tariff liberalization.

2.6 ACTESA's Structure and its Alliance Partners

From the Structurally point of view, ACTESA is a loose alliance of organizations and programs working in the agricultural value chain of Eastern and Southern Africa. This position is strengthened by ACTESA's permanent seats in COMESA policy organs (the Committee on Agriculture and the Committee on Trade and Customs, which gives ACTESA the voice to represent the views of its stakeholders and advocate for changes on their behalf. ACTESA's core objectives have been crafted to take advantage of this comparative advantage.

The ACTESA Secretariat has key roles:

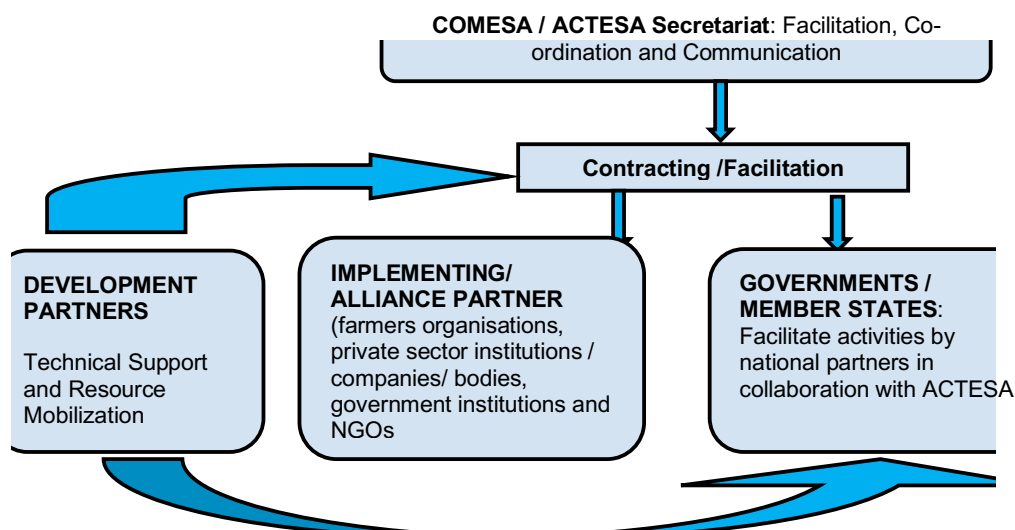
- to coordinate the activities of the Alliance members;
- to serve as Specialised Agency of COMESA, which includes implementing COMESA programmes
- coordinate actions by its members and to mobilize resources from supporting partners. ACTESA will undertake to craft advocacy materials for use in COMESA policy organs and the Tripartite.
- support/ facilitate the implementation of programmes undertaken by its

stakeholders (EAFF, SACAU, EAGC, AFSTA, CIP, IFDC, AFAP, FEMCOM, WASAA among others) in the ESA region.

In implementing the programmes, ACTESA developed this structure in relation with COMESA, Member States, Development and Implementing Partners through Alliance Members in the following manner:

- **Farmers' Organizations** who are represented by regional organizations that include East Africa Farmers Federation (EAFF) and Southern Africa Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU) as umbrella bodies. Their role will be to mobilize farmers and develop their capacities for effective participation in regional trade policy dialogue and program implementation;
- **Member States** led support in decision making through COMESA Policy Organs by providing of a conducive environment for partners; This is mainly through Ministry of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment of the Member States.
- **COMESA Secretariat** provides the platform for the endorsement or approval of policy decision by member states and for setting up the regional agenda. It also provides policy guidance towards the mandate and operations of the Alliance. In addition, the COMESA Secretariat plays a pivotal role of project delegation, resource mobilization and assuming some of the legal obligations of the Alliance. Given the geographical coverage of ACTESA activities, SADC and EAC are important Partners;
- **Development Partners** normally fund various programs, which support COMESA and ACTESA's objectives, especially in as far as they relate to CAADP Pillars II and III;
- **Implementing Partners** included private sector associations, umbrella organizations of civil society and specialized institutions (e.g., AFSTA, AATF, CIMMYT, IFDC, CIP, One Acre Fund, WASAA, FEMCOM) are the arms of the Alliance that are involved in the implementation of specific activities on the ground.

Figure 1: Operational structure of ACTESA with its Alliance Partners



ACTESA signed a two-year Agreement with COMESA on the 10th of March 2010. The Agreement among others stipulated the following:

- To work together on regional initiatives in agriculture and related trade and investment matters and on other matters of mutual interest to the parties, member States and stakeholders.
- Areas of cooperation which included the development of regional agricultural policies, the promotion of investment in agriculture and the promotion of trade in agri-products.
- To regularly consult on issues of common interest with a view to define suitable means and ways for the implementation of planned activities.
- Exchange information and documents, including statistical data, on a regular basis.
- To individually and jointly mobilize resources for the implementation of activities of common interest.
- ACTESA would avail COMESA with all necessary information regarding its management of resources and that it shall be bound by any conditions applying to a financial Agreement signed between COMESA and any Cooperating Partner.

The Alliance Partners of ACTESA include the following organs: The Board; Advisory Committee; Stakeholders Forum; and Secretariat.

2.6.1 ACTESA Board (9 Members)

The ACTESA Board in line with article 7 of ACTESA Charter has the following composition:

Permanent members:

- Permanent Secretary for Trade from the COMESA member country chairing the Ministers of Trade Committee;
- Permanent Secretary for Agriculture from the COMESA member country previously chairing the Ministers of Agriculture Committee;
- SG COMESA or her representative;
- Two Representatives of Regional Farmer Organisations;

2 year-Rotational:

- Two representatives of the commodity exchange and private sector;
- One presentative of UN agencies or International Agricultural Research Institutions;
- One Imminent Private Individual.

The ACTESA Board functions include the following:

- Oversee the implementation of the provisions of ACTESA Charter;
- Keep under constant review and ensure the proper functioning and development of the Alliance Partners;
- Responsible for such policy matters as are provided for in this ACTESA Charter;
- Give directions to the Chief Executive Officer; approve the Staff Rules, Procurement Rules and Financial Rules of the Alliance;
- Consider reports submitted by the CEO on the activities of the Alliance and make appropriate recommendations to the Council of Ministers;
- Appoint External Auditors according to the procurement rules; approve the audit reports submitted to it by the external auditors;
- Submit ACTESA annual progress report to the Stakeholder Forum and the COMESA Council of Ministers;
- Appoint members of the advisory committee; approve fees for services rendered by the Alliance to members or other parties; Approve resource mobilisation activities for the Alliance; Appoint senior professional staff including the Chief Executive Officer;

- Approves creation of a new position upon recommendation of the CEO;
- Approve the annual work plan and budget of the Alliance and can establish ad-hoc working committees;

2.6.2 ACTESA Advisory Committee (15 Members)

Advisory Committee largely incorporate representatives from each category of the stakeholders and their appointment are on a two-year term on a rotational basis to ensure some overlap between new and sitting Committee members for the smooth running of affairs. The Secretariat shall consult with the Stakeholder Forum for potential Advisory Committee members. The Advisory Committee meets at least twice annually and its core-functions comprise of assist ACTESA with aligning its activities with regional and international development programmes so as to contribute to the achievement of ACTESA's strategic objectives; provide technical advice to the Board through the CEO in coordinating agricultural investments and trade in COMESA region; and assist the Board with reviewing the ACTESA long-term strategic and operational plan.

The ACTESA Advisory Committee functions include the following:

Provide guidance to ACTESA in setting priorities and approaches;

- Provide leadership in consultation with the Secretary General of COMESA through the CEO in coordinating investments to improve regional trade in the region;
- Ensure that the ACTESA programmes are aligned with regional and international development programmes so as to contribute to the achievement of ACTESA's strategic objectives;
- Review and recommend approval of the ACTESA long-term strategic and operational plan to the Secretary General of COMESA;
- Provide guidance to ACTESA in the mobilization of financial resources for the implementation of its activities;
- Encourage ACTESA management to adhere to the rules of the Agreement between COMESA and ACTESA;
- Review and recommend the ACTESA work-plan and budget to the Secretary General of COMESA through the Chief Executive Officer;
- Review and recommend to the Secretary General of COMESA the appointment of auditors;
- Represent ACTESA at some functions or meetings where relevant;
- Review and assess ACTESA's year end's Financial Reports;
- Review and recommend improvements to the ACTESA financial regulations

and assess the progress of ACTESA Program implementation.

2.6.3 ACTESA Stakeholder forum (150-200 Members)

The Forum is composed of maximum of three delegates of an Alliance Partner and is the supreme policy organ of the Alliance Partners and are responsible for general policies governing the activities of the Alliance. The Stakeholder Forum which shall be composed of heads and deputy heads of public and private organizations including producers, agro-processors, traders and academia is hereby established and shall be the supreme policy organ of the Alliance. All the powers of the Alliance shall, subject to the provisions of the Charter, be vested in the Annual Stakeholder Forum.

2.6.4 Co-operation with Development Partners

ACTESA will strategically continue working with development partners in developing bankable programmes and in mobilising funds as well as technical expertise especially in the area of commodity trade and actual trading of staple foods at national, regional and international level. So far ACTESA has worked with the following development partners since 2009:

- United States Agency for International Development (USAID);
- Department for International Development (DfID);
- European Union (EU);
- Swiss Aid;
- Australian Government's Department of Foreign affairs and Trade (DFAT)
- US Embassy – Zambia;
- World Bank (WB);
- World Food Programme (WFP);
- African Development Bank;
- Crop Life;
- AGRA;
- Syngenta;
- Hewlett foundation; and
- Marshall Fund.

BOX 1: ACTESA'S RESOURCE PARTNERS

ACTESA'S RESOURCE PARTNERS:

- THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (USAID);
- THE UK'S DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (DFID)
- WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP)
- THE ALLIANCE FOR A GREEN REVOLUTION IN AFRICA (AGRA)
- THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION (EC)
- AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT'S DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE (DFAT)
- THE WORLD BANK
- OTHERS

These shall play a key role in the ACTESA Advisory committee and also the ACTESA Stakeholder Forum annual meetings, where ACTESA secretariat will outline in details key bankable programmes in the ESA region.

2.7.0 SWOT ANALYSIS OF ACTESA IN THE PERIOD 2011-2020.

ACTESA has a unique role as it was established by the COMESA Authority as a Specialised Agency and its on COMESA Policy Organs, namely Ministers of Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources and Trade and Customs. ACTESA has a range of alliance partners making ACTESA a consolidated voice of its partners. The cost of developing markets is too high for each entity deliver alone. Each has complementary competencies which can benefit other members of the alliance. Several development partners are in the same business and it is possible through ACTESA to join these interests. Table below gives a broad summary of the Alliances' Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. Strengthening the Alliance through a team building exercise would help to reduce conflicts associated with competition for resources amongst the alliance partners.

Table 2: SWOT of the Alliance

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ It is a COMESA Institution. ☐ Goodwill from Development Partners. ☐ A large pool of diverse technical competence from its implementing partners. ☐ Credible and recognised by key Development Partners. ☐ Willingness to re-define core business through strategic planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Donor dependence. ☐ High Operational Costs. ☐ Limited Research and Information Management Capacity. ☐ Rapid growth of short-term programmes
OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Development Partners willingness to support ACTESA. ☐ Widely expressed demand for ACTESA services. ☐ Renewed political interest in agriculture at regional, continental and global levels. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☐ Competition with implementing partners for financial resources. ☐ Reduced aid flows from donors.

3.0 WHAT A REVIVED ACTESA STRATEGY 2021-2031 SHALL BE IMPLEMENTED DIFFERENTLY

The ACTESA Strategic Plan 2020-2030 shall be implemented differently from the previous one covering 2011 to 2020, in the following aspects:

3.1 Private sector-led programming and implementation

The private sector will be engaged to deliver a full suite of services (e.g. design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation, and learning) which were traditionally performed in-house by public agencies or performed by multiple private companies. Public Private Partnerships (PPPs) also allows the private sector to move from just constructing assets according to clearly specified designs, to designing and delivering innovative solutions. The private sector has more room to innovate and offer efficient solutions for public services. In addition, the private sector can also use its expertise and network to maximise asset utilisation and the commercial potential of the project. The involvement of private sector players in PPP projects may also give companies valuable expertise and experience to spur their development in the PPP arena and position them to win public sector contracts.

Greater emphasis shall be on programme development, unlike project model of implementation of activities with programming private sector at fore-front including in the implementation. ACTESA shall emphasise farming is a business in its programming. The model currently on the COMESA Seed Harmonisation Implementation Plan (COMSHIP) shall be used where seed companies are supporting the maintenance of the COMESA Variety Catalogue, trading using harmonised COMESA Seed Labels and Regional Seed Certificates to undertake regional seed trade. This has put the seed companies in the lead within COMSHIP target of achieving desired results. Similar strategies shall be derived in the implementation of the fertilizer policy, COMESA wide Regional Food Balance Sheet, Regional Agricultural Commodity Exchange, etc. Overall closer collaboration and partnership with private sector, public services is expected to be delivered in a more way

by making optimal use of public and private sector's expertise, resources and innovation to meet public needs effectively and efficiently. The privates

3.2 Decentralization and devolution of programme implementation

Its formulation as an alliance of stakeholders presents an opportunity for coordinating related interventions. Further, its designation as a specialised agency of COMESA allows for the decentralisation and devolution of agriculture-related interventions to a specialised agency. This shall enhance efficiency and effectiveness of staple food trade facilitation and co-ordination. The resources to be mobilised shall be support alliance partners on the regional ground through regional based organisations in the staple food sector. This shall also strengthen the capacity of state and non-state actors to plan and initiate programs in support of regional agricultural trade and integrated value chains. ACTESA shall play an intermediary and capacity building role rather than doing the actual work on the ground.

3.3 Increased and diversified funding

ACTESA shall not implement everything on the ground, however it shall identify national and regional partners dealing with staple foods and collaborate with this to scale out or up in making shall implementation is complimentary and fully met. The programme managers will require the reorientation of programmes in terms of strategic focus, development of new programme interventions, increased and diversified funding and resources mobilization in line with the Resource mobilization and sustainability strategy to be developed in the short stem;

Given the enormous challenges in the region, funding for all the required programmes has been a real issue.

ACTESA has put together an alliance ready to implement programmes in inputs, cereals and pulses, roots and tubers, horticulture, livestock and fisheries, forest and natural resource products and tree and plantation crops. It is hoped that this wide commodity mandate will allow ACTESA to attract support of the various stakeholders and entities interested in the different value chains. ACTESA shall also offer services in input and output market facilitation.

3.4 Re-orient its programmes within African Union / NEPAD CAADP priority areas of staple food markets and food security

Since inception, there have been significant additions to ACTESA's core working areas. Initially, there were five staple foods: maize, beans, bananas, cassava and rice that constituted the focus for market improvements. However, the range of products has expanded considerably, and other additional interventions have evolved with programmes that were inherited from COMESA. The additional programmes have emerged with a need to align to the activities under the CAADP priorities and ACTESA's original mandate of market access and food security. This constitutes a significant challenge to ACTESA in the context of defining and retaining focus on its core business and achieving tangible results.

On these intervention, key objective to enhance coherence of interventions in the agricultural sector fully responsive to CAADP and which represents a high-level commitment by Governments to support the development of agriculture at both the national and regional level. The National Compacts and National Investment Plans are significant as they capture priority agricultural investments at regional level, providing a vehicle for ACTESA to streamline its interventions and meaningfully contribute to the development of the agricultural sector. Thus, ACTESA's strategy will be to enhance participation in national and regional CAADP processes and strengthen partnerships with AU/NEPAD and CAADP lead institutions.

3.5 Implementation through national structures and other alliance partners

All ACTESA efforts to support programmes will be shaped by national ownership. ACTESA recognises that governments have the primary responsibility for leading the development of the agricultural sector, effecting policy reforms and adoption.

To realise its vision, ACTESA will focus its interventions on the development of national capacities in the areas of policy, markets and trade expansion and ensure that interventions are demand driven and implemented jointly with countries. This will enhance buy-in from stakeholders and commitment to programme implementation.

In working with Alliance Partners, ACTESA shall leverage partner comparative advantage and strengthen partnerships and collaborative management of programmes. Using this principle, ACTESA will leverage the experience of its partners, their comparative advantage and national presence to achieve the desired impacts.

This principle of subsidiarity will allow ACTESA to successfully implement programs at the grassroots giving local stakeholders a sense of ownership and responsibility for successes and failures remains important.

3.6 Regional Cluster Approach

In September 2010, COMESA Council of Ministers endorsed the country cluster approach which groups countries in sub regions as follows:

Cluster A: Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Eswatini and DRC.

Cluster B: Democratic RC, Burundi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda.

Cluster C: Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti and Somalia

Cluster D: Tunisia, Egypt and Libya.

Cluster E: The Indian Ocean Island States (Comoros, Seychelles, Mauritius and Madagascar);

In view of the above, ACTESA shall focus more on facilitation of negotiations for the

removal of trade barriers that impede cross border movements of food commodities within these clusters of the value chain of cassava, banana, maize, cotton, small grains, legumes, livestock (beef, poultry, and dairy) and fisheries.

3.7 Maintains its co-ordination and facilitation role of the ACTESA secretariat

Given the diverse nature of the Alliance, ACTESA Secretariat shall focus on improved coordination, linkages and partnership recognising the complimentary interventions of different development partners within the staple food sub sector. ACTESA will provide a platform that brings together and coordinate stakeholder actions with a view to enhancing development impact in the staple food value chain. Overall, ACTESA's programme approach provides an integrated framework of its interventions and provides different entry points for development partnership. It seeks to harmonise support from different external sources within the national and regional programme frameworks. ACTESA therefore seeks to achieve greater impact in the focus areas than would be possible under the project-by-project approach.

3.8 ACTESA Secretariat remain lean

In facilitation and co-ordination of regional programmes, ACTESA should remain a lean secretariat working with regional implementing partners on the ground who are mainly members of the ACTESA advisory committee and stakeholders' forum. The lean ACTESA staffing shall comprising staff mainly agriculture commodity trade, namely input and output markets, including agricultural finance markets. In this regard, ACTESA shall have the following unique and strategic position in the COMESA region:

- a channel through which the alliance members (farmer organisations, implementing partners, development partners and private sector) receive policy directions and channel their inputs for considerations by COMESA Policy Organ meetings.
- a regional hub that brings together information, knowledge, and best practices on the developing of staple food markets in Eastern and Southern Africa and disseminates to enable national and regional partners implement programmes / activities in a consistent and sustainable manner.
- Regional coordination and facilitation of activities identified by both public and private sectors for implementation at Member-state level.

4.0 ACTESA STRATEGIC PROGRAMME FOCUS AREAS 2021-2031

In addressing above challenges and in the implementation of its programmes, ACTESA shall maintain three themes with emphasis on implementation and shall be as follows:

- I. Policy Development and Implementation;
- II. Market Facilities for trade expansion; and
- III. Capacity Building for commercialization.

Under each of the three areas, specific priority issues, strategic and illustrative interventions are identified as possible means to address the prevailing problems. Given the three strategic focus areas, ACTESA has decided to adopt an approach that will ensure the realisation of interventions described above in terms of securing the necessary support from its partners, ensuring stakeholder buy-in and effective coordination of its implementing partners as well as facilitating the adoption of regional initiatives at the national level. Annex 4 on summary of the ACTESA Results Based Framework shows some of the indicators ACTESA shall strive to achieve by the year 2030.

Figure 2: ACTESA’s Strategic Focus Areas



4.1 FOCUS AREA ONE: POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

4.1.0 Background

In the policy development and implementation, macro and micro-economic policies shall determine the business environment for producers and traders of staple foods. Generally, the ESA region lacks harmonised policies on inputs and output market value chains. To facilitate the improvement of the policy environment for staple foods shall, ACTESA shall concentrate on existing regulations in the area of COMESA Seed Harmonisation Implementation Plan (COMSHIP), COMESA Biotechnology and Biosafety Implementation Plan (COMBIP), harmonisation of fertilizer standards and regulations, staple food standards harmonisation or Mutual Recognition Framework (C-MRF) for Conformity Assessment; Facilitating Intra-Regional Trade in Key Agriculture Commodities; developing a COMESA-wide Regional Food Balance Sheet and Livestock Feed Harmonisation.

On the COMSHIP, focus shall be on the private seed sector regional trade through utilisation of the COMESA Harmonised Seed Labels and Certificates including implementation of the COMESA Seed Information System (COMSIS) and COMSHIP Mutual Accountability Framework (COMMAF) in close collaboration with AFSTA, USAID, DFID and EU. This is in line COMESA Council decision of 2019 that COMESA Member States should fast-track COMSHIP at national level.

Within COMBIP interventions shall also be dealt with as an input support activity utilising biotechnology to increase crop productivity. ACTESA shall Support small-scale farmers in GMO-cotton production in Eswatini, Ethiopia, Malawi, Kenya and Sudan (five COMESA

Member States that have allowed and gazette GM Cotton production and trade) critical to enhance cotton productivity as conventional cotton seed has low yields. This will also include enhancing -credit facilities for the availability of quality and affordable GMO cotton seeds for the small-holder farmers in the four countries and then linking them to national and regional cotton ginneries in the ESA region. Although reliable data is scarce, Egypt, DRC, Sudan and Eswatini import GM soya bean and/or yellow maize for feed purposes. In addition, COMESA countries receive 85% of all emergency food aid to Sub-Saharan Africa; about 50% of the food aid arrives as in-kind donations from countries that are leading producers of GM crops. Therefore, ACTESA shall support establishment of structures and procedures to support the implementation of COMBIP at the regional level as stipulated in the COMESA Policy. Key among these structures includes:

- A regional Biosafety Risk Assessment Desk responsible for administration and management of the regional risk assessment activities (information storage, sharing and exchange) in the COMESA region and liaison with national, regional and international bodies;
- The COMESA Panel of Experts on Biotechnology and Biosafety (PoE) that will be the main guiding body in the formulation of a risk assessment "Opinion" on applications submitted and on which advice is sought by Member States. This will require the development of standard operating procedures.
- A Roster of Reference Experts (RoRE), involving qualified and experienced individuals in the relevant fields of expertise that shall be available to serve on any GMO risk assessment sub-committee (GRASCOM) for the risk assessment;

In recognition of the problem affecting agriculture productivity, Agriculture Ministers of the African Union Member States declared support for increase in quantity of fertilizers used by farmers from about 8 to about 50 kg ha by 2015 during the Conference for an African Green Revolution held in June 2006 in Abuja, Nigeria (the Abuja Summit Declaration on Fertilizer). The Abuja Summit Declaration and commitments were endorsed and reaffirmed by the African Union Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Banjul, The Gambia in July 2006.

The Abuja Summit further realized that there are structural weaknesses in African fertilizer industry, characterized by high fertilizer farm gate prices and noted that regional joint procurement initiative was a potential route capable of reducing fertilizer farm gate price and increase demand. Studies have shown that structural changes in fertilizer procurement in Africa can reduce farm gate price by 11 - 18% which could be significant in making the fertilizer affordable to the smallholder farmer (African Journal of Business Management Vol.2 (3), pp. 065-071, March 2008).

In this regard, feasibility study of a Joint Fertilizer Procurement Initiative (JFPI) funded by Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and implemented by International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) was conducted and underscored the need for the development

of local fertilizer manufacturing companies as well as encouraging intra-regional fertilizer trade. Findings of the initiative were endorsed by COMESA Ministers of Agriculture in 2013 and recommended the following:

- I. Harmonization of conflicting fertilizer policies and regulatory frameworks;
- II. Establishment of a financing mechanism to finance the bulk procurement or manufacturing of fertilizers;
- III. Mapping of a systematic supply chain of bulk fertilizer imports as well as the port logistics and,
- IV. Strengthening of domestic marketing and distribution of fertilizer to the farm gate through the development of agro-dealer networks and profiling of farmer organization/associations and linking them to finance and inputs.

On the management of the staple food commodity crossing the COMESA Member States, facilitate the develop and implement a harmonized regulatory framework for bioprotectants (biopesticides and biocontrol agents) in COMESA Member States in order to accelerate their registration, technology transfer, commercialization, and use for the benefit of small-holder and commercial farmers, food/feed processors and consumers through the following outputs:

Assessment reports of existing of bioprotectant registration and commercialization in 21 COMESA Member States through convening a regional inception workshop for all 21 COMESA Member States, with participation by the private sector, NGOs and other stakeholders to develop a roadmap for regional bioprotectant registration harmonization and commercialization; conducting assessment of bioprotectant regulatory frameworks through engagement of international, regional and national consultants. On the production of a synthesis report on a regional regulatory framework for bioprotectant registration, develop a Harmonized Bioprotectant Registration Regulations for COMESA Member States through consultative Technical Workshops for the development of COMESA regulations, ACTESA to convene COMESA Legal Drafting Committee; validation workshop of the COMESA harmonized regulations; engaging the COMESA Council of Ministers to review and adopt the COMESA harmonized regulations; drafting regional harmonized regulations; This will be followed developing Implementation Plan of the COMESA Bioprotectant Registration Harmonization and Commercialization Regulations developed.

On staple food harmonisation, ACTESA shall work on the Mutual Recognition Framework (C-MRF) for Conformity Assessment; Facilitating Intra-Regional Trade in Key Agriculture Commodities. This work is line with COMESA Council decision on harmonisation of staple crops to ensure food security in the COMESA region. Developing a COMESA-wide Regional Food Balance Sheet, ACTESA shall work EAGC, FEWSNET and SADC in line with Council Decision for Member States should provide support and participate in the activities of Regional Food Balance Sheet (RFBS) programme

The livestock feed harmonisation is in line with COMESA Council Decision for ACTESA

establish a regional programme that will focus on addressing the bottlenecks identified in the regional Livestock policy framework.

All the above are aimed at providing adequate support to national governments as they design evidence-based policies that encourage staple food trade; promoting advocacy aimed at realising policy reforms in favour of small farmers, translating policies into action, and monitoring their impacts; building needed capacity at both the national and regional level and; developing analytical capacity to enhance policy advocacy efforts. In line with above programmes, the focus area on policy and implementation shall be addressed through:

4.1.1 Improving the competitiveness of the staple food sector

The environment for doing business in most ESA countries is unfavourable. This is confirmed by the low ranking indicated in international assessments of the business environment such as the World Bank's "Doing Business" benchmarking, Transparency International Index of Perceived Corruption and the Heritage House Index of Economic Freedom. As a result, there is a relatively low influx of private investment especially in the agriculture sector. This constrains productivity and growth.

A key strategy for ACTESA will be to evaluate elements of the business environment relevant to staple foods production through access to inputs and trade through annual Regional Competitiveness Analyses. This will include:

- (i) Comparative competitiveness benchmarking of national business environments among ESA member states through analysis and empirical client satisfaction surveys;
- (ii) Analysis of key sectors across intra-regional markets in ESA; and
- (iii) Comparative analysis of ESA regional markets against alternative export sources in viable export destinations for selected staple foods.

The regional competitiveness analysis will guide ACTESA in identifying and setting priority areas of focus for business environment reforms. The results will be presented to the COMESA Council of Ministers and will also be published broadly across the region to compare and contrast progress across the ESA countries.

4.1.2 Agricultural trade policy harmonisation

Divergent and inconsistent national and regional trade policies constrain intra-regional trade. A consistent regional staple food trade policy environment that streamlines procedures ensures predictability and limits government interference in market functions is critical to the development of the staple food sector.

The overall ACTESA strategy will focus on:

- securing approval from COMESA Policy Organs for policy reform and harmonisation;

- supporting national adoption and implementation;
- working with national level partners/programs to ensure activities are anchored around policy reforms; and
- conducting value chain training and awareness campaigns on these regional decisions and opportunities, targeting key players within the staple food value chain.

4.1.3 Policy advocacy forum

A major constraint in the ESA region is the lack of reliable data and analysis to inform policy decisions. This has contributed to implementation of poor policies that stifle market development and trade expansion. The Policy Research component will seek to build partnerships with research institutions to carry out objective research and provide the evidence necessary for policy makers to make informed policy decisions and influence policy reform in close collaboration with FARNPAN, ReSAKSS, ILRI, ReNAPRI, etc.

ACTESA's strategy will be the establishment of a Policy Advocacy Forum. This will bring together national and regional research institutions that endeavour to change policy through evidence-based research and advocacy. In addition, an ACTESA reference centre or ACTESA knowledge Portal shall be established to serve as a regional depository for all research outcomes.

4.1.4 Policy outreach

This component will draw on the outcomes of the Policy Research component in order to lobby and advocate for policy change across all the policies developed by ACTESA highlighted above. ACTESA will play an active role in developing national and regional policy dialogue platforms to influence policy amendment and adoption of best practices in market and trade development.

ACTESA's interventions will include; i) capacity development of ACTESA Secretariat staff and its stakeholders in order to strengthen policy advocacy and awareness activities; ii) facilitate dialogue between private and public actors in the staple food values chain; iii) facilitate negotiations within country clusters on barriers against trade and iv) publishing research results in formats that are easily accessible to decision makers and stakeholders across the staple food value chain.

4.1.5 Support regional value chains in staple crops, livestock and fisheries

Almost 60% of the world's arable land is in Africa, and so ACTESA will work with 80 million small holder farmers in COMESA with a population of 610 million. ACTESA with its alliance partners will support existing regional value chains in cassava, banana, maize, cotton, niche crops (small grains and legumes), livestock (beef, poultry, and dairy) and fisheries so that national and regional markets can be accessed. In development of the policies and increase in productivity, ACTESA shall ensure that in the regional value chains, there is smooth product flows, high standards and error-free production (UNCTAD, 2018) in

close collaboration with COMESA Agriculture and Industry Division. Therefore, ACTESA shall assist private firms in investing into knowledge, technology and other forms of transfers to the benefit of local suppliers. This shall ensure exploitation of economic scale, lower production and then in removing non-tariff barriers through COMSHIP, COMBIB, harmonisation of fertilizer standards and policies and staples foods grades and standards harmonisation.

4.2 FOCUS AREA TWO: MARKET ACCESS AND TRADE EXPANSION

Regional trade in staple foods can be increased by improving key trade corridors, market structures, expanding financial services for storage, rural credit and finance, infrastructure, processing and trading. ACTESA's role will focus on strengthening market facilities and services for trade expansion.

The five priority areas of focus will include:

- Service Forums;
- Market Access Development and Expansion;
- Market Information Systems;
- Capacity Building for staple food traders.
- Development of regional commodity exchange

4.2.1 Service forums

The Core Activity in this area will be the creation of service forums to develop and disseminate best practices and lessons learned for development of key facilities and services supporting commercialisation of staples and their expansion across the region.

The staple food value chains are characterised by fragmented and weak services that do not adequately support staple food trade. Smallholder producers are cut off from transport infrastructure, lack access to the finance as well as to information and technology that could help them meet the quantity and quality requirements of the market. On the one hand, agriculture traders including agricultural processing enterprises, wholesalers or export firms do not have support services necessary to scale up operations and expand their rural networks in order to cater to smallholder farmers.

ACTESA will create service forums that will bring together alliance members and stakeholders within the staple food value chains to interact with each other and share best practices and lessons learnt. The forums will be used to identify constraints at different points of the value chain and identify actions needed to ease them. The service forums will be the key public – private partnerships along the staple food value chains. This shall be done in close collaboration with COMESA Investment Agency and COMESA Business Council.

ACTESA's strategy will be to i) establish and run service forums in areas critical to the value

chain including input and commodity production, trade facilities, market infrastructure and transport, finance and investment, regulations, strategic food reserves, industrialisation and humanitarian assistance, ii) Collate information generated from the service forums and present them to the advisory committee highlighting impacts, the action needed, potential costs and time frame of the various actions.

ACTESA will also conduct independent monitoring and evaluation to develop market facilities, identify and formulate new interventions to strengthen the provision of market services.

4.2.2 Input market access development and expansion

The informal and disconnected nature of the regional staple food value chain negatively impacts the sector's competitiveness. Market facilities and services in this context are defined as the systems that link and integrate all value chain players in order to achieve greater efficiency within the commodity marketing chain. Because these systems are either weak or non-existent in many ESA counties, ACTESA will seek to strengthen and develop market facilities including commodity exchanges and warehouse receipts system a view to improving the competitiveness and integration of staple food markets in the regional and international markets.

On the market access development and expansion, ACTESA's strategy will be to drive understanding and generate support for Warehouse Receipt System (WRS) among various actors in the staple food value chains (farmers, producer organizations, traders, warehouse operators and processors) and also address existing WRS deficiencies.

4.2.3 Market information and trade intelligence systems

Regional markets are often characterised by weak transmission of prices between markets. Where market information systems/services exist, they are not well known or provide inconsistent information that cannot be effectively utilised. In addition, the movement of agricultural staple food or commodities from surplus areas to deficit areas is restricted by policies motivated by national food security concerns. These concerns in part emanate from the lack of credible information on available food stocks in the region and the lack of appreciation for the role of trade in promoting food security. ACTESA will seek to enhance the availability of market information services in forms that are relevant to its stakeholders.

ACTESA's strategy in this regard will be to strengthen or complement existing market information systems such as FEWSNET informal cross border trade monitoring and development of a regional food balance for the ESA region.

In this regard ACTESA will:

- strengthen and leverage existing national systems and create linkages to the regional ESA wide Market Information System;
- strengthen national data collection systems to ensure data integrity and reliability;

- strengthen cross border data collection and monitoring systems
- drive use of market information by both smallholder producers and private actors and;
- disseminate information through various communication tools for example SMS's, radio and periodic publications of the regional food balance sheet.

The above are in line with COMESA Council Decisions on ACTESA to develop a regional food balance sheet (Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Food Balance Sheet) and enhance establishment of a credible and reliable agricultural food security information system. With support of AGRA in 2011, a RFBS for Malawi, Mozambique, Zambia and Zimbabwe was initiated and there is need re-launch the AKP.

This initiative included a component on the return/takeover of the Southern Africa Region's Cross Border Monitoring System from the Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWSNET). This was done in order to establish institutional frameworks, provide capacity development in data collection methodology and the use of regionally harmonized RFBS templates. It has been noted that a phased approach must be taken in order to implement the RFBS across the region, as capacity must be developed in Member States, effective and sustainable institutional frameworks must be put in place, regionally harmonized RFBS templates and data collection methodology must be established, and reliable data is required for analysis and dissemination.

The scope shall include:

- Developing regionally harmonised template to construct food balance sheets based on existing EAC and SADC frameworks;
- Strengthening collaboration on the RFBS among ACTESA alliance partners;
- Facilitate the establishment of dialogue platforms at national and regional levels in providing oversight on food balance sheet and informal cross border trade monitoring.

This has recently been reinforced by a directive from the Fifth Joint Meeting of the Ministers for Agriculture, Environment and Natural Resources held in Addis Ababa in 2013 that the RFBS formulation process be consolidated across the region. Implementation of the ESA-RFBS commenced in February 2012 as a pilot project on four Southern Africa countries, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe following the signing of a new Grant Agreement with AGRA. In the same year the Southern Africa Cross border monitoring system was taken over by COMESA and a Memorandum of Understanding signed on 30 September 2012. Since the commencement of the implementation of this project, ACTESA has achieved significant steps necessary for the construction of a regional food balance sheet. The following are the key achievements:

- Successful review of the national consultative forums for Zimbabwe and Mozambique, their composition and structure; and establishment of a strong

institutional framework anchored around the Ministries of Agriculture in the four pilot countries. The committees brought together public sector agencies, private sector actors in the food industry as well as relief agencies and a number of development partners to compliment this effort

- Successful harmonization of national/regional food balance sheet templates and adoption by stakeholders of the same, at the regional consultative forum. National templates were further translated into a regional food balance sheet template, which was harmonized from the SADC and EAC template for a standardized regional food balance sheet. This validation process included a number of key partners among them WFP, FAO, FEWSNET, EAGC, and USAID.
- Terms of reference and a scope of work for the national food balance sheet committees were developed, key of which is the pooling and aggregation of the food balance sheet data and validation of the national food balance sheet at the national level.
- Country by country stakeholder mapping, registration and training on the process of regional food balance sheet formulation, capacity building on the harmonized templates as well as on the roles and responsibilities were conducted so as to ensure effective and efficient performance of the food balance sheet committees for credible data.
- Food balance sheet data pooling and aggregation for two of the four countries: Zambia and Zimbabwe whose aggregated baseline food balance sheets have been successfully achieved. Mozambique and Malawi have capacity challenges which will be subsequently addressed in this no cost extension plan as a tentative programme was put in place for February 2014.
- Ongoing informal cross border trade monitoring and generation of bulletins across thirty border points in the Southern Africa region have consistently been published and circulated to relevant partners.
- Ongoing development of an online food balance sheet web portal that will be linked to other food security initiatives in the region is under construction.

4.2.4 Production and market development forum

Producers and their associations are the key enterprises that drive staple food markets. Under the objective of commercialisation of small-scale producers, the Core Activity of ACTESA will be to host the Production and Market Development Forum. This forum will support development and dissemination of methodologies to promote increased farmer integration into agricultural markets. It will also promote key aspects that support the transformation of production from subsistence to market-oriented production, including association development.

If producers are to benefit from trade, market facilities and services then market access

must be complimented by domestic policy reforms and trade capacity building. ACTESA will ensure that the capacity building will be demand driven. A series of consultations will be conducted with regional and national farmer organisations to identify their specific needs and requirements for trade capacity building in order for them to participate in regional value chains. ACTESA will seek to address the specific needs and requirements of the smallholder farmers in trade related areas.

In this regard ACTESA will seek to package and disseminate information about activities on the ground- best practices and lessons learned – and disseminate them to a broad community of stakeholders in the ESA region. The second part of the strategy will be to enhance private sector and smallholder farmers' capacity to comply with regional and international market standards for staple food trade.

4.2.5 Development of a COMESA-wide agricultural commodity exchange

ACTESA will provide support and training to existing national commodity exchanges, regional commodity exchange like the EAC and to strengthen their systems and improve their operations, then link them virtually or spot market. In line with 2005 Abuja Declaration on African Commodities support development of a regional commodity exchange for staple foods through:

- Accessing the existing national commodity exchange available in the COMESA region in terms of commodity policy/ credit act and regulatory framework and review capacity gaps to strengthen them;
- Supporting furthering systems (exchange or electronic) development between existing national commodity exchanges and facilitate market information system (including regional food balance sheet and informal cross border monitoring already in place);
- Development of regulatory framework for national commodity exchanges where nonexistence or in draft form;
- enhance private sector and smallholder farmers' capacity to comply with regional and international market standards for staple food trade;
- Conducting a regional workshop to come up with a roadmap on harmonization of the commodity trade exchanges in the COMESA region;
- Come up with a COMESA Regional Commodity exchange and co-ordinate spot and futures exchanges in the ESA Region dealing with inputs markets (seeds include Bt cotton, maize and cowpeas, fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides, veterinary drugs and animal feeds), output markets (house receipt system, regional food balance sheet, staple foods standards harmonisation, etc) and financial markets (micro-finance, weather index insurance, agro-dealer banks, etc).

This is in line with COMESA Council of Ministers Decision on ACTESA coming up with structured

market operations and harmonisation of warehouse receipt system and harmonization of standards on cereals and legumes by 2017.

4.3 FOCUS AREA THREE: CAPACITY BUILDING FOR STAPLE FOOD TRADERS

Staple food producers are the enterprises that form the backbone of growth in staple foods markets. However, large numbers of producers within the eastern and southern African region are poorly integrated into national and regional markets. These producers base their production around their immediate consumption needs, rather than toward market opportunities. As a result, they often minimize investments into farming systems, resulting in low incomes, highly variable production levels, and low productivity.

Additionally, smallholder farmers are not part of the formal marketing chain. There are a number of reasons for this such as: small volumes of production, weak farmer-based apex organisations, and limited access to post-harvest handling technologies and facilities, information asymmetry across the value chain, inconsistent quality requirements, government-imposed import/export bans, and prohibitive transport costs.

As smallholders account for most of the production in the ESA region, this not only has a significant impact on cross-border trade, but also on the region's food security. As such, it is critical to address the factors that constrain small holder farmer participation in the staple food markets.

The priority areas will include:

- Development of existing Farmer Organisations;
- Innovative Linkages to markets and services;
- Productivity and Technology Adoption.

4.3.1 Strengthening existing farmer organizations

ACTESA recognises the importance of empowering smallholder farmers to drive their own development rather than be passive recipients of aid. In this regard, ACTESA will endeavour to strengthen and facilitate the development of existing farmer associations to enhance their capacity to engage in the staple food value chains and improve their participation in national and regional markets. In the past 9 years, ACTESA has been working with East African Farmers' Federation (EAFF) in the Eastern Africa and Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU) in the Southern Africa.

ACTESA's strategy in this area will include: i) Strengthening Farmer Based Organizations (FBO's) by promoting viable models that can sustainably provide needed services such as storage, access to finance and market linkages to smallholders is critical for the growth of the staple food sub sector; ii) strengthening formal value chain linkages between farmers, FBO's and regional marketing infrastructure such as larger warehousing facilities and commodity exchanges and iii) capacity building activities to enhance the effectiveness of FBO's.

4.3.2 Innovative linkages to markets

Several organizations in the ESA region are developing methodologies to promote increased farmer integration. These organisations have utilised tools for educating farmers in planning and marketing their crops, as well as developing innovative linkages to facilities and services. Through the ACTESA Strategy, ACTESA will promote innovative interventions which will support the transformation of smallholder farmers from subsistence to market-oriented production.

4.3.3 Productivity and technology adoption

Despite the scientific advances in agricultural technology development the impact of technologies has been uneven. Smallholder farmers in the less-favoured areas are unable to benefit as much as those in high potential areas. Further, smallholder farmers especially women based are often excluded (due to their marginalisation – geographically, economically and politically) from external sources of information that could enable them to try out new approaches. Such farmers do generate many effective innovations themselves and as result agriculture productivity and efficiency is compromised. ACTESA shall support women-based organisation like COMESA's COMESA Federation of Women in Business (COMFWB) and WASAA.

ACTESA's strategy in this area is to enhance information dissemination on new technology and productivity enhancing options through extension and smallholder farmer training. This will include:

- training and support to enhance adoption of technologies such as drip irrigation, promotion of climate-smart varieties within COMSHIP with COMESA Climate Change programme and agricultural water management technologies for increased productivity especially in resource endowed but underutilized areas
- Support for use of agriculture productivity enhancing options such as conservation farming, carbon trading, biotechnology through GMO cotton iii) support for extension by enhancing the capacity of farmer organisations and adoption of extension models such as training of lead farmers to serve as focal points for information dissemination. This shall be conducted in close collaboration with AATF, ASARECA and CGIAR centres.
- Annex 6.0 show summary of the indicative budget for the first 5 years of the Strategy.

5.0 RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

The implementation the above strategic focus areas of policy development and implementation; market access and trade expansion; and capacity building for staple producers, requires development of an ACTESA robust resource mobilisation and sustainability strategy in close collaboration with advisory committee and stakeholder alliance partners. The strategy shall enhance ACTESA's image as an efficient, effective and relevant regional mechanism for producing deliverable results that add value to agricultural development. ACTESA will continue to maintain its reputation as an effective organisation with unquestionable credibility and reputation.

The ACTESA Resource and Sustainability Strategy shall comprise a mix of mechanisms. Funding shall be done in a manner that is efficient, equitable, transparent and sustainable. For ACTESA's Alliance Partners' programmes, targets for cost recovery shall be set along a no-recovery-cost plus continuum. On one hand services could be offered freely but on the other hand recovery of recurrent and capital costs shall be done.

According to the ACTESA Charter, financial resources of the Alliance shall be derived from donor support for programme implementation, subscriptions payable by members, interests from capital, loans, gifts, legacies, donations and income from fund raising activities. Gifts, legacies and donations shall be accepted subject to consultations with the Chairperson of the Board.

In this regard and in moving forward and in order to sustain itself, ACTESA shall derive the following strategies within its Resource mobilization and Sustainability Strategy:

- Grants from focused, results-based and flagship programmes dealing with harmonisation and implementation of agricultural input and output market access e.g. COMSHIP in close collaboration with development partners in the COMESA Member States with possibility of private sector thereafter

taking over to ensure sustainability. In view of this, a Grants Manual shall be developed to deal with ACTESA Staple Food Programmes;

- ACTESA being a COMESA Member State Institution should have a core funding by Member States to support three core-positions of the ACTESA Secretariat management positions of ACTESA CEO, Finance and Grants Manager, Human Resource Manager and Operations/ Programme Manager.
- Membership fees or subscriptions by Alliance Partners to be agreed at the ACTESA Stakeholders Forum as a way of supporting ACTESA sustaining its programmes; Subscriptions shall be payable in advance or on due dates prescribed by the Board. Revised subscription amounts shall be adopted by two third majority vote of the Board and approved by two thirds vote of the Annual Stakeholder Forum or Alliance members can finance through paying implementation fees and user charges;
- Registration fees for ACTESA's especially the General Assembly/stakeholder forum).
- Service delivery of input, output and financial markets (brokering, facilitative and information sharing role, linking partnerships);
- Product delivery and information services (statistical data, analytical reports (e.g. competitiveness of the staple food programmes in the ESA Region);

6.0 PROGRAMME SPECIFIC BUSINESS PLANS

As part of the Resource Mobilisation and Sustainability Strategy, and ACTESA shall develop Programme Specific Business Plans in close collaboration with ACTESA Advisory Committee and Stakeholder Forum. The ACTESA Business Plans shall be developed from programmes that have advanced and the resources to be mobilised shall include:

- Fees raised from use of harmonised business transactions, e.g currently seed companies are making payment when registering their varieties on the COMESA Variety catalogue;
- Charges on the use of the COMESA harmonised documentation, e.g ACTESA has planned sale of the COMESA Regional Seed Labels to facilitate trading of seeds across COMESA Borders and packaging of seed consignment as confirmation of having followed the COMESA Harmonised Seed Trade Regulations;
- Charge on commission arising from the linking of input and commodity traders to markets within the COMESA region and beyond.

In view of the above, ACTESA should develop a policy on how these funds may be raised and used. The Policy should include the percentage of Internal Cost Recovery to be charged and how the funds may be invested and or used. The use of these funds should always be supported and guided by the ACTESA Board.

7.0 ACTESA COMMUNICATION, VISIBILITY AND ADVOCACY STRATEGY

ACTESA shall revise and implement its draft ACTESA Communication, Visibility and Advocacy Strategy with the aim of ensuring continued strong projections of the image of the organization and positive reporting of the impact it continues to make. The strategy is cognisant of the need to develop communication products that are well adapted to various stakeholders. The Strategy incorporates a focus on target audience research to determine which channels, activities, and materials to use and the frequency to reach the audience with the selected materials. The strategy also includes monitoring and evaluating audience response to the communication activities. Recognizing the need to develop public opinion support for public policy reform and improving facility and service provision to improve the business environment, ACTESA will employ an aggressive media strategy. This will include dissemination of the Annual Regional Competitiveness Analysis, as well as relevant outputs from other activities.

The success of ACTESA's operations, governance and management depends on effective communication both internally and externally with its stakeholders and implementing partners.

ACTESA shall develop a strong communications pillar that will ensure that the output of ACTESA's programmes is communicated effectively, and a public awareness campaign can be effectively mounted. ACTESA communications will support programme implementation in three key-ways:

- maintaining external linkages with stakeholders and its development partners,
- support to policy research, outreach and advocacy
- overall programme implementation to enhance awareness and ACTESA's visibility across the region.

8.0 MONITORING AND EVALUATION (M&E) STRATEGY

The Monitoring and Evaluation M&E Strategy shall provide a framework that will guide the monitoring and evaluation of ACTESA programmes in terms of outputs, outcomes, impact during the life of the strategy with particular focus on the following:

- Regional seed trade shall increase from current from current 2% to 10% by 2031.
- Access to seed by small scale farmers shall increase from 23% to above 50%, resulting in enhanced farmer access to improved seed varieties.
- COMESA Member States utilize new data and science-based information to create an enabling environment for increased investment in biotechnology applications.
- Increased level of confidence and utilization of agricultural biotechnology in the COMESA region through systematic, balanced and effective communication.
- Free flow of fertilizer and its raw materials and adoption of bulk or joint fertilizer procurement, which in turn, will reduce farm gate prices and stimulate fertilizer uptake.
- New investments by fertilizer manufacturers into regional fertilizer production and blending, which may lead to further reductions of farm gate prices.
- Enhanced national and regional food security.
- A functional ESA Regional Food Balance Sheet established
- Improved regionally cross border volumes for staple crops.
- Increased crop productivity and production, leading to improved food security

and higher incomes.

- Harmonized grades and standards for staple commodities.
- Enhanced early warning mechanism through regular access to readily available information on stocks and food security.
- Improved predictability of national, regional and cross-border environment for grain markets through improved availability of information.
- More timely availability of information on grain markets and food security at national and regional levels, leading to evidence-informed trade policies.
- Strengthened regional public-private sector partnerships.
- Improved market participation of enterprises involved in live animal (beef cattle and small ruminant), meat value chains in the regional markets.
- Regional agricultural commodity entity shall be fully operational.

The ACTESA M&E system's purpose is to determine if ACTESA implementation and impacts are progressing towards planned objectives and the extent to which activities are leading to increased competitiveness and integration of the staple food sector. A framework for monitoring implementation of activities has been developed within the ACTESA Secretariat to continuously and periodically assess progress towards stated goals, objectives and outcomes.

Given the wide scope of its operations at the national level and through its implementing partners, the M&E system will build on already established national structures for data collection mechanism and reporting to avoid duplication and build synergies. The M&E system will be cost effective, feasible, dynamic and easy to follow and use as much as possible existing data. This should facilitate ease of adjustments of formats and indicators within the system. The nature of ACTESA's activities suggests that quantitative and qualitative indicators will be needed for monitoring and evaluation. The Results Framework in Annex 4 provides objectives, outcomes, indicators, and targets to monitor and evaluate the implementation and impact of CAADP in the region.

ACTESA will seek to achieve a growth rate of 20% per year in inter-regional agricultural trade through concerted efforts targeting agricultural productivity increases of 15% per year for the major staples (Annex 2). Productivity increases would be driven by implementation of programs that help the region to double fertilizer and improved seed use over the five-year period (2021-2026) while increasing cultivated area under irrigation from current levels of 5-9 percent to above 25 percent by 2031. A review of this plan would allow ACTESA to target more ambitious but achievable results for the 2021-2031 period.

The nature of ACTESA's activities suggests that quantitative and qualitative indicators will be needed for monitoring and evaluation. The Results Framework from the Operational Plan (OP) shall provide objectives, outcomes, indicators, and targets to monitor and

evaluate the implementation and impact of ACTESA in the region. The M&E system in ACTESA is expected to be linked to COMESA's M&E system. A performance-based M&E system will help to track outputs of operational activities. The M&E system improves overall performance by monitoring whether programs are achieving desired objectives and goals (results). In order to control time, human and material resources and quality of service delivery, appropriate and structured information must be provided to decision making and management processes.

9.0 ACTESA KEY STRATEGY INTEVENTIONS IN THE SHORT AND MEDIUM TERM

As soon as the ACTESA Strategy Plan (2021-2031) is approved by the ACTESA Board, with financial and human resources mobilized as in annex 5, ACTESA shall undertake the following:

9.1 ACTESA OPERATIONAL PLAN (OP) FOR THE PERIOD 2021-2026

Based on the ACTESA Strategic Plan for the period 2021-2031, ACTESA shall develop Operational Plan (OP) for the period 2021-2026 in line with its three focus areas, namely policy development and implementation: Market Facilities for trade expansion; and Building Capacity for commercialization. The OP should focus on the activities that will be implemented by ACTESA secretariat in close collaboration with ACTESA Board and Advisory Committee.

Given that ACTESA is an Alliance based organisation, the proposed activities have a mix of tasks that will be carried out by the Secretariat alone and others that will be carried out jointly with Members of the Alliance. Members of the Alliance are expected to identify with and internalize the Plan within their own institutions. The different roles of the Secretariat and Partners have been identified to avoid overlapping line with the CAADP principle of exploiting regional complementarities and co-operation. The implementation of the OP will take cognizance of on-going and planned activities of the Regional Economic Communities and the recently launched AfFTA in January, 2021.

The purpose of the OP is to translate the broad mandate and guidance of the ACTESA Strategic Plan 2021-2031 into a concrete working document with specific action-oriented direction focusing on private sector led interventions. Most importantly, this OP shall indicate how the Alliance will allocate its budgetary, personnel, and other resources.

The ACTESA Operational Plan shall provide a prioritized set of proposed activities, the

tasks assigned to make activities actionable and reflect the level of effort. These are linked to the expected deliverables with clearly specified timeline and responsibilities. The OP also lays out a results framework/log frame, a robust monitoring and evaluation system and an indicative budget. The OP also identifies the potential risks and assumptions and shows how those risks are intended to be managed.

Key programmes in moving forward and in line with COMESA Council decisions on ACTESA in the period 2011 and 2020 shall include existing ones or those that are low hanging fruits namely:

9.1.1 Increasing agricultural productivity of staple crops.

- Support seed companies trading using COMESA Regional Seed Labels and conduct registration, annual renewal of COMESA varieties on the COMESA Variety Catalogue in line with COMESA Seed harmonisation Implementation Plan (COMSHIP);
- Support COMESA Biotechnology and Implementation Plan (COMBIP) in Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan where Bt cotton has been officially approved and support regional biosafety assessment co-ordination through establishment of the COMESA Panel of Experts on Biotechnology and Biosafety (PoE) and finally Develop Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the Regional Biosafety Risk Assessment Mechanism;
- Harmonisation of fertilizer policies / regulations, standards, quality assurance and market development in the COMESA Member States and thereafter establish sustainable regional Joint Fertilizer Procurement Initiative (JFPI);
- Harmonisation of warehouse receipt system for staple commodities and in the process harmonise grades and standards for staple food commodities

9.1.2 Support small-scale farmers access to national, regional and international markets.

- Develop a regional food balance sheet (Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Food Balance Sheet) to enhance establishment of credible and reliable agricultural food security information system based on existing EAC and SADC frameworks including informal cross-border trade monitoring system;
- Re-launch the ACTESA Knowledge portal through collating existing information on export competitiveness of staple and document effective ways for smallholder farmers to adopt appropriate small-scale low-cost irrigation technologies and utilize available water resources for crop, livestock and fisheries production to moderate effects of climate change and adapt climate resilience programmes;
- Development of regional value chain programmes in cassava, banana, maize, cotton, small grains, legumes, livestock (beef, poultry, and dairy) and fisheries

taking into consideration climate change and gender perspective;

- Strengthen and facilitate the development of existing farmer associations to enhance their capacity to engage in the staple food value chains and improve their participation in national and regional markets;
- Establish a COMESA Regional Agricultural Commodity Exchange entity to co-ordinate spot and futures exchanges in the 21 COMESA Member States focusing on inputs markets (seeds include Bt cotton, maize and cowpeas, fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides, veterinary drugs and animal feeds), output markets (house receipt system, regional food balance sheet, staple foods standards harmonisation, etc) and financial markets (micro-finance, weather index insurance, agro-dealer banks, etc).

Assess the overall effectiveness of the Operational Plan every five years and, if appropriate, recommend changes to objectives, strategies and activities.

9.2 CONDUCT ACTESA STAKEHOLDER MAPPING AND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

ACTESA shall undertake stakeholder mapping and develop a Relationship Management (Stakeholder) Strategy. This shall include development of ACTESA Partnership Design Framework. ACTESA shall be expected to be modelled around a stakeholder platform within the agricultural, agribusiness and trade facilitation sector of the economy.

9.3 ACTESA HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT MANUAL

Design job descriptions for ACTESA employees shall include relevant information that can guide the development of a Performance Management Framework. These shall include the following information: job title, responsible to, responsible for, job position summary, job purpose, primary duties and responsibilities, qualifications, personal attributes, job requirements, working experience, and working conditions.

All training programmes conducted or attended ACTESA staff shall be accompanied by written training report indicating the training objectives, learning outcomes, training activities, location of training, target participants, summary of the training contents, and evaluation of the training, and the link of the workshop to ACTESA work and performance expectations.

In line with Revised ACTESA OP and its Charter, ACTESA shall finalize development of the ACTESA Human Resource Manual.

9.4 ESTABLISH ACTESA PROGRAMMES DESIGN MANUAL

In line with ACTESA OP 2021-2026, ACTESA shall develop Program Design Document (Manual) covering the following elements: Problem Statement, Needs Assessment, Baselines and Indicators, Program Goal, Program Objectives, Change Strategies, Program Rationale, Assumptions, Theory of Change Statement, Logic Model, Client Service Pathways (Beneficiary Description), Framework for Annual Work Plans, and Monitoring

and Evaluation Framework.

9.5 ACTESA PARTNERSHIP DESIGN FRAMEWORK DEVELOPED

The above should be implemented in the following manner:

- Defining the need for partnership;
- Setting up and maintaining the partnership;
- Designing structures for open and honest communication;
- Creating partnership norms and working relationships;
- Creating collaborative partnership work plans;
- Partnership transition and management of change;
- Monitoring, evaluation, and learning framework for the partnership;
- Development of ACTESA Partnership Design Framework;

9.6 CONDUCT A RE-LAUNCHED ACTESA ANNUAL STAKEHOLDERS' FORUM

The annual or biannual ACTESA Stakeholders' Forum shall be re-launched. The Stakeholder Forum is supreme policy organ of the ACTESA Alliance Partners and will continue to be responsible for general policies governing the activities or programmes of the Alliance.

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11.0 ANNEXES 1.0 – 6.0.

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