

COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

MARCHE COMMUN DE
L'AFRIQUE DE L'EST ET
AUSTRALE



MERCADO COMUM PARA
AFRICA ORIENTAL E
AUSTRAL

Tel : +260 122 9725/32
Fax : +260 122 7318
E-mail :
HTUsecgen@comesa.int
Web : <http://www.comesa.int>

COMESA Centre
Cairo Road
P O Box 30051
LUSAKA 10101
Zambia

PRESS RELEASE/ COMMUNIQUÉ DE PRESSE

REF.

Date: February 13, 2007

COMESA Delegation to Address Agricultural Issues in WTO Context, and Promote CAADP

A delegation of agribusiness leaders jointly led by the Secretary General of the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)ⁱ, Mr. Erastus Mwencha, and Ugandan Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Mr. David Gabindadde-Musoke, will be in Washington, DC from February 12-16, 2007 to promote the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Project (CAADP).

During this time, the International Food & Agricultural Trade Policy Council (IPC), and the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars are pleased to announce a public speaking engagement featuring Mr. Erastus Mwencha titled "The Doha Development Round: What's at Stake for Africa?" Keynote speakers will include Ajay Vashee, President of the Southern African Farmers Union, Florizelle Liser, Assistant USTR for Africa, and Barbara Chattin, Deputy Assistant USTR for Agricultural Affairs.

The public speaking engagement will be on February 14, 2007, from 10-noon, in the Auditorium of the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, 1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC. Members of the press are welcome to sit in the first and back rows.

The mission of the delegation is part of the COMESA agricultural sector investment promotional efforts under CAADP.

African producers face various challenges that make them uncompetitive in global markets. Western subsidies to the farm sector are among the key constraints to African producer competitiveness. It is important that agreement be reached on meaningful cuts in farm subsidies when the suspended WTO talks resume. In addition to subsidy cuts in the WTO discussions by developed countries, Africa's farmers found the element of "Aid for Trade" particularly appealing. It is the view of stakeholders on the continent that when the talks resume, this component should be strongly emphasized. The COMESA delegation visiting Washington will, among other issues, raise this matter with various US authorities.

COMESA holds that “Aid for Trade” must be a visible and key cornerstone of the Doha Round, and that it should focus on the following:

- 1) **Farming:** the agri-food sector and rural development, as this is where the bulk of the poor reside, and where many developing countries have potential comparative and competitive advantages;
- 2) **Promoting trade** within and among developing countries, as well as on promoting trade between developing and developed countries;
- 3) **Implementing national and regional strategies** for economic development, such as the AU/NEPAD agriculture (CAADP) and infrastructure strategies, rather than on donor-led projects and priorities;
- 4) **Infrastructure investments**, as these will require large financial commitments that cannot be fully funded by developing countries themselves. These investments should also help build capacity to harmonize regulations, including Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) measures; infrastructure improvements will also enable a reduction in the prevalence of certain non-tariff barriers to trade between developing countries;
- 5) **Encouraging a consultative process** within developing countries that includes farmers, the business sector and national civil society groups; this process should include the development of capacity within civil society and private sector groups to commission analyses, and formulate and advocate for positions regarding infrastructure and rural sector priorities. Aid for Trade should also focus on building the human capacity within Ministries of Agriculture, Rural Development, Trade and Finance to work together to determine investment and policy priorities; and
- 6) **Creating the conditions for the private sector**, including farmers, who represent the largest share of the private sector in Africa, to thrive.

During their visit, the delegation will have in-depth discussions with the US EXIM BANK, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation and the Corporate Council on Africa. COMESA will also hold the US/COMESA Trade and Investment Framework Meeting, make a presentation to the US Congress, meet the Administrator of USAID, and hold discussions with the World Bank.

ⁱ COMESA is the largest African economic grouping with a population of 400 million people. Its member states are: Burundi, Comoros, D. R Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sudan, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In the year 2000, COMESA launched the first African Free Trade Area and in 2008, COMESA is schedule to launch a Customs Union.

For more information, contact:

Charlotte Hebebrand +1 202 328 5001, Hhebebrand@agritrade.org
Yvonne Siu +1 202 328 5056, Hsiu@agritrade.org