

Development Challenges in the EAC: A Call for Action

With about 40 million undernourished people, food security is already one of the main challenges in the East African Community (EAC) where food production is challenged by extreme weather conditions. In the next decades, the situation is expected to further aggravate as climate change worsens in a region where as much as four East Africans in five rely on agriculture for their living. If Sub-Saharan Africa is not to become the home of an additional 600 million hungry people, early action and adoption of sound policies harnessing the potential role of trade is a must.

With abundant resources, a population of over 130 million people, large tracts of arable land suitable for a variety of agricultural production, abundant water bodies including fresh water lakes, rivers and direct access to the ocean, opportunities abound for accelerated development in the region. Despite this potential, 4 out of 10 East Africans are still undernourished. Poor infrastructure prevents the movement and supply of agricultural products from surplus to food-scarce areas, leading to massive wastage, and the lack of suitable storage facilities, inefficient transport network systems, and value addition to facilitate longevity of the agricultural products remain major challenges for the region.

Further, despite progressive regional trade integration that materialised in the establishment of a Common Market last year, there is still a huge divergence between agreed Protocols and Agreements and their implementation at the national level. Indeed, some domestic policies conflict with regional integration efforts. For instance, the export ban instituted by a member State on the much needed maize exports at a time hunger was hitting other parts of the region only resulted in informal maize trading, leading to inflated prices and hence exacerbating the crisis.

In addition, non-tariff measures continue to frustrate the integration efforts, movement of merchandise in some of the member states is subjected to multiple checks and certification requirements that frustrate the traders involved and often result in unnecessary costs. These challenges call for immediate action for their redress by all stakeholders, including:

- ❶ Effective implementation of regional Protocols and agreements
- ❷ Developing active stakeholders' networks for dialogue, capacity building and sensitisation to better exploit and harness the regions' resources, in a sustainable manner.
- ❸ Support by development partners for EAC integration and stakeholder capacity building

← QUICK FACTS

» In the East African Community, 4 in 5 people rely on agriculture for their living

» Large segments of the region's population are currently undernourished. The percentage ranges from 19% in Uganda, and 44% in Tanzania to a staggering 66% in Burundi.

» It is expected that climate change will create an additional 600 million undernourished people in sub-Saharan Africa by 2080.

» The East African Community has adopted an EAC Food Security Action Plan and a Climate Change Policy

CUTS Action alerts are to draw attention and call for action on key trade and development-related issues. Readers are encouraged to quote, reproduce and distribute this paper for advocacy purpose.

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What is the East African Community (EAC) ?

First established in 1967 (and dissolved in 1977), the EAC was reestablished on 7 July 2000 with Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda as members and with its headquarters in Arusha, Tanzania. Burundi and Rwanda acceded to the EAC Treaty in 2007. EAC has a total population of about 133 millions (2010) and its GDP at current market prices was US\$79.2 billion (2010). Its institutional structure includes a Summit, a Council of Ministers, a Legislative Assembly, a Court of Justice, a Secretariat and several other organs and Sectoral Councils.

EAC aims at greater and deeper integration among its member through the establishment of customs union, common market, and monetary union. It is also negotiating an Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the European Union (EU) as a bloc. All EAC members are also members of the WTO and working towards harmonising their positions in the WTO.

How will climate change affect food security in the region ?

Climate change is going to be the biggest challenge for EAC countries in the 21st century. Sub-Saharan Africa is likely to face above average global warming, leading to major losses in agricultural production and hence increased malnutrition. As a result, the number of additional people at risk of hunger in sub-Saharan Africa could reach 600 million by 2080, i.e. twice the number of people currently living in poverty in sub-Saharan Africa.

Climate change will lead to more droughts, less agricultural and food production, and changes in patterns of production as the conditions will be less supportive of the production of current staple food crops. As always the poor and marginalized, whether the subsistence farmers in rural areas or the poor consumers in urban areas are expected to face the worst consequences. This can be disastrous for EAC countries where even now large segments of population are undernourished.

What should climate change adaptation policies take into account ?

Disasters and related food security crises can no longer be treated as just a diversion from 'normal' development, but must be seen as part of the agri-food system. The increasing frequency of droughts and floods will require making available a range of drought resistant and short duration seed varieties. Credit programmes will need to be designed with attention to the increasing levels of risk faced by clients.

Promotion of high yielding packages of seed and fertiliser will need to be more cognisant of the likelihood that poor producers may become deeply indebted when crops fail.


What is PACT EAC?

Over the next three years, CUTS International Geneva and its partners throughout the region will contribute to the policy-shaping process that will address the challenges of trade, climate change and food security through a project entitled "Promoting Agriculture-Climate-Trade linkages in the East African Community" (PACT EAC).

PACT EAC consists of two separate but synergetic segments for human and institutional capacity building of East African Community (EAC) stakeholders to take better advantage of international trade for their growth and development and poverty reduction, particularly in the context of climate change.

The two segments focus on issues related to trade-climate change-food security linkages and WTO discussions/negotiations respectively. Through research-based advocacy and networking and by linking grassroots with Geneva, the project will assist EAC stakeholders in better understanding and dealing with the critical challenges of climate change, food security and effective participation in the multilateral trading system.

USEFUL RESOURCES

 CUTS Geneva Resource Centre, 2011. *Agriculture in Development of Select African Countries: Linkages with Trade, Productivity, Livelihood and Food Security.*

 WTO-UNEP, 2009. *Trade and Climate Change: A report by the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Trade Organization.*

 CUTS International Geneva - PACT EAC Project
www.cuts-grc.org

 East African Community Secretariat
www.eac.org

 Rio +20 - Earth Summit 2012
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www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/