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Netherlands



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Eastern and Southern Africa Convenes Public-Private Policy Dialogue and Grain Trade Forum in Tanzania

**Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, July 16, 2024:** The Eastern Africa Grain Council (EAGC) in partnership with TradeMark Africa (TMA) and the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) has today kicked-off a two day Eastern and Southern Africa Public-Private Policy Dialogue and Grain Trade Business to Business Forum in Tanzania. The forum is funded by the governments of the Netherlands and USAID's Economic Recovery and Reform Activity (USAID-ERRA) programme implemented by TMA, alongside Food Trade Coalition for Africa (FCTA) and UK International Development.

The forum provided a platform for productive dialogue and collaboration among key stakeholders in the staple foods value chain, addressing re-emerging challenges like export bans and non-tariff barriers (NTBs) that hinder trade. The event will also offer Business to Business (B2B) networking opportunity sessions.

Agriculture sector is vital to Eastern Africa's economy, crucial for food security and economic growth, yet, regional trade is often constrained by policy, and investment decisions that impede agri-food systems transformation. Climate shocks exacerbate productivity challenges, compromise quality, and increase post-harvest losses, leading to food insecurity.

The discussion explored regional trade opportunities, particularly how Tanzania and Uganda, with their surplus production, can meet the staple food demands of neighbouring countries facing shortages.

Speaking on behalf of Hon. Hussein Mohamed Bashe, Minister of Agriculture, Tanzania during the forum's official opening, Ms Irene Mlola, Director General, stated, *"The Tanzanian government is committed to supporting initiatives that enhance agricultural trade and food security. This forum represents a pivotal moment for us to address trade barriers and collaborate towards a more integrated and prosperous region. I commend the Eastern Africa Grain Council and its partners for providing this platform to tackle these challenges. We must deliberate on policy bottlenecks to staples export trade, explore viable solutions to advance our sector, and establish harmonised approaches to facilitate food trade across borders."*

She further disclosed that the Tanzanian government continues to implement measures to promote trade and transform Tanzania into the regional food hub. Through initiatives such as Build a Better Tomorrow (BBT) and Agenda 10/30, the ministry demonstrates its commitment to advancing the agriculture sector in production, processing, and trade.

Mr. Elibariki Shammy, Tanzania Country Director, TMA, remarked, *"By fostering public-private collaboration, we aim to establish a more efficient and resilient trade environment for all stakeholders while at the same time, building inclusive trade relationships that will address smallholder farmers challenges. TradeMark Africa is dedicated to stimulating inclusive trade that empowers women and youth. The outcomes of this forum will contribute to enhancing food security and economic resilience."*





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Nega Wubeneh, Head of Markets & Trade, AGRA noted that, *"In addition to efforts to increase agricultural production and productivity by addressing systemic challenges in the agricultural value chains, it is also keenly aware of the role of trade in creating economic opportunities and jobs, particularly for the youth."* He further added that AGRA has been organizing bilateral dialogues between the AGRA President and the ministers of Agriculture in the region in a bid to ease grain trade restrictions.

Mr. Gerald Masila, Executive Director of EAGC, remarked, *"The grain sector in Eastern Africa exemplifies significant interdependence between our countries, driven by diverse agro-ecologies and crop calendars. Surplus production zones rely on deficit zones to market their excess produce, while deficit zones depend on surplus zones to meet their food requirements. Access to markets and access to food are both critical for achieving food security in the region."* He emphasized on the impact of policy and regulation adding that, *"Grain trade policy measures should include an advance notification for private sector to enable them anticipate and adjust to changes in the trade policy environment."*

The Council in collaboration with various partners, is actively developing and implementing interventions to enable trade through several projects and service pillars. Notably, the EAGC-TradeMark Africa (TMA) partnership is addressing challenges in the export value chain via the "Strengthening Competitiveness in Export-Oriented Staple Food Value Chains in East Africa" project. The project primarily focuses on the Uganda-Kenya and Tanzania-Kenya corridors while also considering Malawi and Zambia as commodity sources.

Additionally, EAGC's partnership with AGRA on the "Stimulating Inclusive Export-Oriented Pulses Trade in the Northern Corridor of Eastern Africa" project aims to enhance trade, income, and job creation for youths and women in the pulses export value chain between Ethiopia and Kenya. This involves providing BDS services, establishing trade linkages with Kenyan off-takers, and hosting stakeholder dialogues to address trade bottlenecks. Moreover, the USAID Trade and Investment Hub initiative previously supported EAGC in hosting regional B2B forums, resulting in significant grain trade volumes across the region.

The Eastern and Southern Africa Public-Private Policy Dialogue and Grain Trade Business to Business Forum aims to foster collaborative learning and stakeholder engagement by sharing recent sector studies, including TMA-supported value chain analysis and AGRA's rapid assessment on food and policy interventions. It also facilitated keynote speeches, panel discussions, and B2B sessions to strengthen trade ties and tackle logistical challenges and bilateral talks with government representatives from Uganda, Tanzania, Malawi, and Zambia to identify and propose solutions to export trade bottlenecks. The forum explored the need to strengthen the existing Food Trade Coalition for Trade in Africa platform for continuous engagement among value chain players and policymakers, enhancing the trade environment. The events were crowned by commitment from the governments of Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Zambia and DR Congo to facilitate private sector buyers and sellers to undertake efficient grain trade across borders.





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## About TradeMark Africa

TradeMark Africa (TMA) is a leading African Aid-for-Trade organisation founded in 2010, with the mission to grow intra-African trade and increase Africa's share in global trade, while helping make trade more pro-poor and environmentally sustainable. TMA operates on a not-for-profit basis and is funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Canada, Denmark, the European Union, Finland, France, Ireland, the Mastercard Foundation, the Netherlands, Norway, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America. TMA works closely with regional and continental organisations, national Governments, the private sector, and civil society.

Since its inception, TMA has delivered substantial gains for trade and regional economic integration in East Africa and the Horn of Africa, including a reduction of 16.5% in cargo transit times on the Northern Corridor from Mombasa to Bujumbura, and a reduction of an average of 70% in the time taken to cross selected one stop border posts. TMA works in 14 countries across East and West Africa, Southern Africa, and the Horn.

In 2022, TMA set up a catalytic finance company – Trade Catalyst Africa – that will pilot commercially viable projects for creating trade infrastructure (both physical and digital) as well as increasing access to Trade Finance for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

Both TCA's and TMA's headquarters are in Nairobi, Kenya. Offices are in: EAC (East Africa Community) Secretariat - Arusha, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Ghana, Malawi, Rwanda, Somaliland, Tanzania, and Uganda, with operations in Mozambique, South Sudan, and Zambia. For more information, please visit [www.trademarkafrica.com](http://www.trademarkafrica.com)

## About the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)

AGRA is an African-led organisation focused on putting farmers at the centre of our continent's growing economy. AGRA advances uniquely African solutions to sustainably raise farmers' productivity and connect them to a growing marketplace. Together with its partners – including researchers, donors, African governments, the private sector, and civil society – AGRA seeks to create an environment where Africa sustainably feeds itself. For more information, please visit [www.agra.org](http://www.agra.org)

## About USAID-ERRA

The Economic Recovery and Reform Activity (ERRA) is a US\$75 million five-year program spanning from 2022 to 2027, funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) through TradeMark Africa (TMA). ERRA aims to promote transformative trade and investment reforms in the East and Horn of Africa while supporting the region to return to a growth pathway and recover from the negative impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic while





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advancing competitiveness, resilience, and sustainability. For more information, please visit [www.trademarkafrica.com/erra/](http://www.trademarkafrica.com/erra/)

### **About Eastern Africa Grain Council (EAGC)**

The Eastern Africa Grain Council is a regional organization with membership drawn from across the Eastern and Southern Africa. Membership is drawn from grain value chain stakeholders currently with presence in 10 countries across Africa including Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, South Sudan, DRC Congo and Ethiopia. EAGC's key products and services include promotion of structured trading system (STS) through the warehouse receipting systems (WRS), and Regional Grain Trading platform (G- Soko), Market Information Systems (MIS) offered through the Regional Agricultural Trade Intelligence Network (RATIN- ([www.ratin.net](http://www.ratin.net))) and evidence-based Policy Advocacy and Training and Capacity Building through the Grain Business Institute (GBI). For more information, please visit [www.eagc.org](http://www.eagc.org)

