



TRADEMARK AFRICA

POLICY BRIEF

Policy Reform as Patient Capital: TMA's Decade-Long Investment to Advance EAC Sanitary and Phytosanitary Bill to Unlock Billions in Payment

Over the last ten years, TradeMark Africa (TMA) has played a catalytic role in the development and technical finalisation of the East African Community's **Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Bill**, an important step toward strengthening the region's agri-food trade system.

Working closely with the East African Community (EAC) Secretariat, Partner States and regional SPS experts, TMA's support has helped bring the Bill to completion at technical level at the meeting of Legislative Draftspersons and SPS Experts held from 9 to 13 February 2026 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, preparing it to progress through the Community's legislative process.

Through sustained technical assistance and regional coordination with the aim of improving the quality, safety and value of traded goods in East Africa, TMA:

- 1. Co-developed a modern regional SPS framework**, aligned with disciplines under the World Trade Organization SPS Agreement and international standard-setting bodies including Codex Alimentarius Commission, World Organisation for Animal Health, and International Plant Protection Convention.
- 2. Facilitated regional technical consultations**, including expert and legislative drafting sessions that consolidated and reconciled the SPS Bill text.
- 3. Strengthened the regional SPS ecosystem** through investments in harmonised SPS measures, pest risk assessments, veterinary mutual recognition processes, laboratory capacity, and inspector training across Partner States.
- 4. Supported digital SPS systems**, including frameworks that enable electronic certification, digital signatures, and cross-border SPS data exchange.
- 5. Promoted regional coordination mechanisms**, ensuring that national competent authorities can implement harmonised SPS procedures effectively.

The technical support and coordination provided will ensure that the resulting legislation reflects both international standards and regional realities, a significant step toward a coherent and predictable regulatory framework. It will anchor previously harmonised regional measures in binding Community law to strengthen predictability for traders, improve food safety and plant and animal health systems, and reduce SPS-related trade frictions across the region.

This means fewer border delays, reduced duplication of inspections and certification, improved predictability for traders, and increased confidence in regional and international markets

Together, the legal framework and its institutional architecture will position the East African Community to operate one of the most coherent and harmonised SPS governance systems in Africa, enhancing seamless agriculture trade and export competitiveness, and reinforcing regional integration and participation in continental trade under the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA.) The Bill directly supports AfCFTA implementation by aligning SPS systems across Partner States and enabling mutual recognition, a key requirement for seamless continental trade.

With the legal framework finalised, the priority now shifts to operationalising institutions, particularly the Regional SPS Committee, and ensuring effective coordination, resourcing and accountability mechanisms to translate policy into measurable trade outcomes.

The Trade Opportunity From Stronger SPS Systems in The East African Community



\$670 million annually³

Estimated annual agricultural exports from the East African region.



\$2.5 billion¹

Approximate share of intra-regional trade in the East African Community that consists of agricultural commodities.



65%²

Estimated value of agricultural exports lost across Africa due to aflatoxin-related trade barriers.



¹ East African Policy Observer (2024). East Africa to develop policy on aflatoxin to boost food security.

² EAC Secretariat. Regional Workshop on Aflatoxin Prevention and Control

³ EAC Secretariat. Regional Workshop on Aflatoxin Prevention and Control.