



Concept Note: Learning and Planning Event on Strengthening Capacity on Systems Resilience for Enhanced Trade

Date: 14-16 April 2025

Location: Ezulwini, Eswatini

Background:

African Union Member States continue to pursue programmes and activities aimed at accelerating regional integration and cooperation arrangement on the continent. Strengthening policy and harmonization of trade processes and procedures is crucial for enhancing Africa's economic integration and ensuring resilient agrifood systems.

A learning and planning event is scheduled for 14 - 16 April 2025 in Ezulwini, Eswatini to provide a unique platform for key stakeholders to engage in structured dialogues, share experiences, and develop actionable strategies that align with the Kampala Declaration, Malabo Declaration, CAADP Strategy and Action Plan, and African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Through targeted capacity-building, policy coordination, and stakeholder engagement, this initiative will contribute to the realization of Africa's agricultural transformation and trade development goals. Africa's agrifood systems are central to achieving economic growth, food security, and sustainable development. The Kampala Declaration (2025), Malabo Declaration (2014), CAADP Strategy and Action Plan (2026-2035), and the African Common Position on the UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSSS) emphasize the need for enhanced policy coherence and trade harmonization to accelerate economic integration. The AfCFTA, which aims to create a single market for goods and services, underscores the importance of policy alignment and institutional capacity to facilitate safe, transparent and predictable intra-African trade.

The Food Systems Resilience Program (FSRP) under implementation by the AUC, RECs and other partners also highlights the need for coordinated policies and regulatory frameworks to address cross-border challenges such as market fragmentation sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) related non-tariff barriers (NTBs). Despite various commitments, policy inconsistencies and capacity gaps continue to hinder effective trade and investment flows in Africa's agrifood sector.

This learning and planning event will provide a unique platform for key stakeholders to engage in structured dialogues, share experiences, and develop actionable strategies that align with the Kampala Declaration, Malabo Declaration, CAADP Strategy and Action Plan, and AfCFTA. Through targeted capacity-building, policy coordination, and stakeholder engagement, this initiative will contribute to the realization of Africa's agricultural transformation and trade development goals.

The learning and planning event will provide a strategic platform to enhance the capacities of stakeholders on policy harmonization, trade transparency, and institutional coordination to support Africa's common position in regional and global trade policy dialogues while ensuring alignment with AfCFTA objectives.

Objectives:

1. To enhance policy coherence in agriculture and trade priorities with a focus on, SPS measures and TBT, and investment frameworks in alignment with AfCFTA.
2. To strengthen capacity of African policymakers, focal persons on SPS and TBT and institutions to better advocate for Africa's agrifood sector in regional and global on trade processes.
3. To improve institutional capacities to align trade and agricultural policies across Regional Economic Communities (RECs), the African Union Commission (AUC), and member states.
4. To facilitate knowledge exchange on best practices in harmonization of SPS measures in regional learning platforms and policy dialogues.
5. To develop work plans for harmonisation of measures and procedures for enhanced agri-food trade.

Expected Outcomes:

- Alignment of national and regional trade policies with AfCFTA and CAADP goals improved.
- Enhanced capacities of African policymakers in development of common positions for enhanced agri-food.
- Trade and investment potential in the agrifood sector identified.
- Collaboration between policymakers, private sector actors, and regional institutions enhanced.
- Action plans developed for for harmonization of measures and procedures for enhanced agri-food trade.

Implementation Strategy:

- **Policy Harmonization Workshops:** Conduct regional workshops on harmonizing of SPS standards, TBTs, and regulatory frameworks.
- **Training on Development of African Common Positions:** Build technical expertise among trade negotiators through capacity-building programs in collaboration with RECs and AUDA-NEPAD.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Establish platforms for dialogue between policymakers, private sector actors, and development partners.
- **Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting:** Develop a results framework to assess progress in harmonization of trade measures and procedures.

Target Participants (Up to 70 Participants):

1. African Union Commission (AUC) – DARBE, ETTIM (4 participants)
2. AfCFTA Secretariat and AUDA-NEPAD – Trade and Agriculture Policy Experts (5 participants)
3. Regional Economic Communities (RECs) – ECOWAS, COMESA, SADC, IGAD (8 participants, 2 per REC)
4. National Ministries responsible for Agriculture, Trade, and Economic Development (10 participants, representing 10 FSRP countries)
5. Private sector representatives – Agricultural trade associations, Cross border traders associations, Regional business councils, MSMEs, and agribusiness investors (6 participants)
6. Policy research institutions and academia – Think tanks, universities, and research institutes (5 participants)
7. Development partners – World Bank, FAO, UNECA, AfDB, AKADEMIYA 2063 (6 participants)
8. Farmer organizations and cooperatives – Representatives from regional farmer groups (4 participants)
9. International trade and policy SMS – Experts on trade harmonization (17 participants)

Workshop Approach: The event will consist of:

- Plenary sessions with keynote presentations on trade harmonization and negotiation best practices.
- Panel discussions on AfCFTA implementation and trade policy coherence.
- Breakout sessions focused on country-specific challenges and solutions in trade policy, and workplans development.
- Capacity-building sessions with hands-on training on agrifood trade processes and policy harmonization.
- Networking opportunities to foster partnerships between key stakeholders.

Speaker & Institution Proposals

#	Topic Area	Potential Speakers/Institutions
1.	Opening & High-Level Vision	AUC DARBE Commissioner, Minister of Agriculture – Eswatini, AfCFTA Secretariat
2.	Trade Integration	UNECA, AUDA-NEPAD, TRALAC
3.	SPS and TBT	AfCFTA Secretariat, FAO, OIE, AU SPS Committee, Codex Africa
4.	Regional Experiences	Representatives from ECOWAS, SADC, COMESA, IGAD
5.	Negotiation Capacity	TRALAC, UNCTAD, CUTS International
6.	Private Sector Engagement	African Business Council, Eastern Africa Farmers Federation, PanAAC, AFSTA
7.	Action Planning	AUC, AUDA-NEPAD, UNECA, AfDB, AfCFTA