

**Press Release N° 346/ 2014****“Moving from business by necessity to entrepreneurship by choice” – The African Union Commission supports women in agribusiness**

Porto Novo, Benin 04 Decmeber 2014: The African Union Commission is implementing a project to empower women through agricultural entrepreneurship. The project, supported by the UNDP, and implemented by UN Women through the African Centre for Transformative and Inclusive Leadership (ACTIL) – a joint programme of UN Women Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) and Kenyatta University - involves a series of transformational leadership training workshops for Women in agribusiness.

Women farmers are the pillars of agriculture and food security in Africa. While millions of women in sub-Saharan Africa contribute to their national agricultural output, family food security, and environmental sustainability – as producers, resource managers, sellers, processors and buyers of food – they are still marginalized in agricultural marketing and business systems. Women in agriculture face unique challenges compared to their male counterparts: they operate smaller farms; keep fewer livestock. Women also have less access to agricultural and business information and extension services, and to credit and other financial services. They are less likely to use inputs such as fertilizers, improved seeds and mechanical equipment, and often have little influence within agricultural value chains.

In spite of the challenges there are many women that are breaking through the barriers and establishing themselves in agribusiness, as producers, processors, marketers and exporters. The African Union Commission is focusing on such women. The training aims to enhance women’s productivity, benefits from, and leadership role in agribusiness. The transformational leadership approach espoused by UN Women (ESARO) and ACTIL motivates women in agribusiness to understand the players and dynamics in their respective value chains, and to position themselves not only to seize opportunities for maximizing profits but also to mobilise other women and youth in the sector for greater impact..

This initial phase of the project benefits women and youth from Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cote d’Ivoire, DRC, Ghana, Kenya, Niger, Nigeria, and Uganda. The training is organized in three sessions: two sessions in English in Nairobi, Kenya, at the Africa Centre for Transformative and Inclusive Leadership (ACTIL) and one session in French at the Songhai Centre in Porto Novo, Benin. One hundred and thirty women will have benefited from the project by the end of December 2014.

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