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**DIRECTORATE OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION**

**Press Release**

**African Union Commission Conducts an Ecosystem Mapping Consultation on Cassava Value Chain Development for Youth Employment, Job & Wealth Creation in Africa**



**Accra, Ghana, 27th September 2018** – The African Union Commission (AUC) in partnership with the African Agri-Business Initiative Network (AAIN**),** on this day,conducted an ecosystem mapping consultation on Cassava Value Chain Development under the theme: **Unlocking the Business Potential of Cassava for youth employment, Job and wealth creation in Africa**. The consultation was a follow up to the conclusions of the previous African Union SMEs Workshop on cassava value chain agro-enterprises held in Accra Ghana from 15th to 19th March 2018 and which focused on improving the competitiveness of SMEs in the Cassava Value chain.

The ecosystem mapping consultation was designed to identify the key assets (physical, intellectual and financial) that are available to support the cassava value chain development at national, regional and continental level. The mapping sought to understand how existing assets can be managed to deliver value, and to also inform how the current knowledge on cassava industry can be leveraged to support youth and women employment in both the rural and urban spheres in Africa and beyond. More specifically, the objectives of the workshop were to Brainstorm on how to improve investment decision making, create incentives and benefits for various youth and women categories and potential roles and responsibilities of various actors towards employment creation focused on Cassava in Africa; Identify the most critical assets needed to transform the Cassava Value Chain and Co-develop tools that will support the Ecosystem Mapping at country, regional and continental level. The meeting was attended by key actors Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies, NGOs, Development Partners, and the private sector, producers, processors, manufacturers, financiers, investors, allied sectors, cooperatives; youth networks; incubators, SMES, research and institutions.

On behalf of the Director for Trade and Industry, Mr. Hussein Hassan, Head of Delegation and Head of the Industry Division welcomed all participants to the workshop. He emphasized on its importance, specifically the objective of developing tools that will inform the design of the ecosystem mapping of the cassava value chain. He highlighted the fact that Industrial development is key to the attainment of structural transformation of economies in Africa. Currently around 40% of intra-African trade is through industrial products. However, given that Africa trade among herself is at only about 16%, there is a need to increase intra-African trade. This should be driven by manufacturing and industrial processing of goods and services to create more jobs and wealth especially for our growing youth population.

Representing the Director of Crop Services, Ministry of Food and Agriculture (MoFA) of Ghana, Mr. George Prahfirst and foremost, commended the African Union Commission for putting this workshop and welcomed all participants to this important three-day workshop. He also noted that the Ministry of Food and Agriculture has taken keen interest in the objectives of this African Union’s consultative workshop as it seeks to develop the cassava value chain for employment, job and wealth creation in Africa. Thus, moving forward, the Ministry is positioned to support the transitioning of smallholder cassava farmers from subsistence farming to business-oriented enterprises and contribute to Ghana’s cassava commercialization strategy, as Cassava is one of the commodities being considered as a food security crop under the policy. He concluded by expressing the expectation that the workshop will birth business relationships and networks that will be beneficial to the cassava value chain actors.

According to Mr. Peter Kuria Githinji, AAIN Director of Incubator Systems and Skills Development, the potential for the cassava is highly under exploited. However the actors along the value chain collectively have all the required assets needed to drive the industrialization agenda for Africa. The creation of network that will translate the results of the cassava ecosystem mapping into action using proven, models of business support for youth women, especially incubation acceleration and huge investment is a timely investment.

The Meeting highlighted the importance of Human and Institutional capacity, physical infrastructure, access to finance (financing models), access to markets, business support and infrastructure and policy and advocacy to unleash the potential of the Cassava value Chain in unlocking job creations for youth and women. Therefore, the meeting strongly recommended the establishment of a Continental Body of Cassava meant to work out, advocate and support the AUC on policy making regarding the Business potential of the Cassava Value Chain and the establishment of a Technical Working group to develop the TORs and Operational guides and instruments for the continental body

Participants expressed satisfaction with the conduct of the workshop and its content. They suggested that should be more regular in order to effectively address issues as they emerge, consolidate on skills, knowledge and techniques, and take the opportunity to discuss Public – Private Partnership

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