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**Keynote Statement**

**By**

**H.E. AMBASSADOR JOSEFA LEONEL CORREIA SACKO**

**COMMISSIONER FOR RURAL ECONOMY AND AGRICULTURE  
AFRICAN UNION COMMISSION**

**At**

**The Global Forum Food and Agriculture (GFFA)**

**Expert Panel: Free and Fair Agricultural Trade in and with Africa –**

**The Role of AfCFTA for Food Security**

**17th January 2020, 09:30-11:00am.**

**Venue: CityCube Berlin, Level 1, Room A1**

**Honourable Maria Flachsbarth, State Secretary, Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany;**  
**Honourable Ministers of Agriculture;**  
**Heads of Delegation from International Development Agencies;**  
**Representatives from the Private Sector;**  
**Ladies and Gentlemen**

It is an honour for me and the African Union Commission in general to make this key note presentation at this important event on Free and Fair Agriculture Trade in, and with Africa, the Role of Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the organizers for organising this important event.

As you may be aware, the African Union is implementing its Agenda 2063 that defines Africa's blueprint and master plan for transforming Africa into the global powerhouse of the future. It is the continent's strategic framework that aims to deliver on its goal for inclusive and sustainable development.

The establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) was identified as one of the flagship programmes under the AU Agenda 2063.

The AfCFTA aims to significantly accelerate growth of Intra-Africa trade and use trade more effectively as an engine of growth and sustainable development by doubling intra-Africa trade, strengthening Africa's common voice and policy space in global trade negotiations.

The Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP) a framework within which AU Member States plan and implement agriculture-led investments and the 2014 Malabo Declaration states Africa's commitment to tripling intra-African Trade in Agriculture Commodities and Services as a catalyst to achieving food and nutrition security, reduce poverty and enhance economy growth.

**Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,** as you may be aware, the agricultural sector in Africa plays a dominant role in the economy in terms of its contribution to GDP growth, employment and trade.

It is also noted that the continent's demand for food continues to outstrip domestic supply by some 20% with a total average import bill of US\$35billion growing annually at 6%. To take advantage of the fast-growing intra-African market opportunities, African agriculture must undergo structural transformation that entails shifting from subsistence-oriented production systems towards more market-oriented ones, and that ensures benefits for the most vulnerable segments of the population – smallholder farmers, rural women and links farmers to regional and global value chains.

The intra-African agrifood market is expanding quickly and food demand is projected to triple by 2050 driven by high population growth, rapid urbanization and income growth. This provides an opportunity to not only boost trade in food and non-food agricultural commodities and services but also enhance food security in Africa and contribute to the global food security.

Whilst the rise in food consumption is driven mainly by demographic factors and rising incomes, many African countries chronically struggle to produce and distribute efficiently agrifoods in sufficient quantities from areas with surpluses to regions experiencing food shortages. In that sense, there is a clear linkage between effective implementation of trade policies and food and nutrition security.

In many African countries food imports are becoming increasingly important for ensuring food security with implications for the important role that effective trade policies can play to mitigate food insecurity. Trade affects each of the four dimensions of food security through its impact on incomes, prices, stability of supply, linking food-deficit areas with food-surplus areas, as well as food safety.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the global food system has become highly complex and interconnected. Every country in the world is dependent, to a greater or lesser extent, on trade to fulfil its overall food needs and therefore there is no doubt that there is a close relationship between trade and food security.

Indeed, the free trade area today represents a large market of over one billion people for intra-African trade in food and non-food goods and services. This economic base is not only a source of stability but also economies of scale to support increased competitiveness, diversification, economic transformation and commodity-based industrialisation of our strategic commodities.

Hence as we advance in the implementation of the free trade agreement, efforts must be geared toward supporting our member states to formulate responsible trade agreements that are conducive to improved food security by strengthening evidence on the implications of changes in trade policies, providing capacity development in the use of this evidence, and facilitating neutral dialogue.

Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, in our response to the implementation of the AfCFTA, I am glad to inform you that the AU Commission's Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture which I heard has developed a continental framework for Boosting intra-African trade (BIAT) in agricultural commodities and services. The key target of this framework is to advance the implementation of the Malabo Commitment on tripling intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services. I call on all here gathered to support us in the implementation of this important framework.

I am also glad to inform you that the African Union Commission is leading efforts to strengthen capacity of domestic Africa Agribusiness Apex Bodies to partner and respond to the opportunities offered by entering into the free trade agreements. We are grateful to the support being provided by the Afrika Verein and the German Agribusiness Alliance in this regard.

Driven in part by the knowledge that manufacturing and agro-processing which accounts for a lower share of Africa's agricultural export and a key driver of intra-African trade, I am glad to inform you that the my Department of Rural Economy and Agriculture of the AUC is aggressively facilitating the provision of, and improvement in, basic infrastructure to support export processing in Africa through the establishment of the Common African Agro-Parks (CAAPs) regional initiative with focus on agro-processing and light manufacturing to boost agricultural productivity and trade.

In conclusion, in order for us all to realise the benefits of Africa's free trade agreement in achieving food security, I would like to emphasise that:

1. The CAADP framework and principles are still relevant and I would like to call on all to continue to support their implementation.
2. We need to continue to strengthen our institutions in the trade and agriculture sectors to allow for synergies that will drive this common agenda.
3. We must invest in strengthening systemic capacities of our domestic Private Sector and Agribusiness Apex Bodies engaged in agriculture and agribusiness value chains to be able to partner and respond to the opportunities provided within the continental free trade agenda.

4. We need to embrace an inclusive growth and programmatic approach to our development efforts driven by fairness, equity and transparency that will realize the benefit for youths, women, smallholder farmers and vulnerable in our societies.

The AUC is ready to work with all the relevant partners to assist AU Member States and the business sector to derive maximum benefits from the AfCFTA agreement.

I thank you.

***By Amb. Josefa Sacko, Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture, African Union Commission, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.***