PRESS RELEASE:

It’s not too late to boost trade and business opportunities for small holder farmers,
says Regional Grain stakeholders

4th October 2017, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania: The Eastern Africa Grain Council (EAGC) in partnership with the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) hosted key grain stakeholders in a consultative forum ahead of the 7th Africa Grain Trade Summit. The Forum reflected on the key successes achieved over the past decade and identified constraints faced by smallholder farmers despite a myriad of efforts committed in transforming the sector. The forum was made possible as a result of long standing relationship between EAGC and CTA over the past couple of years and plans for collaboration the next decade.

A scoping study presented during the forum indicated that the Eastern Africa region has been a recipient of development support and grants from several bilateral and multilateral donor agencies. The study reviewed over 50 projects implemented and supported by over 25 agencies in the 10 EAGC countries of operation.

Speaking during the opening of the stakeholders’ forum, Mr Eugene Rwibasira, the EAGC Chairman indicated that previous interventions from development partners over the years have focused on addressing challenges facing the smallholder farmers. “Most of the times these interventions are designed in an office set up without consultations with beneficiaries and stakeholders on what and how it should be done” Added Mr Rwibasira.

Further, there is rarely an opportunity to consult the beneficiaries even after implementation of project activities to analyze the impact and changes based on previous outcomes.

“This forum affords stakeholders an opportunity to deliberate and identify key programmatic interventions which need to be considered as key focus areas in the next 5 years” lauded Mr Gerald Masila, the Executive Director of the EAGC. The study further indicated that the economies of the EAGC countries of operation are largely dependent on agriculture accounting
for over 75% of jobs with over 75% of the population engaged in agriculture. It further highlighted that over the last few decades, services have become a significant contributor to the GDPs of the region as the adoption of commercially-driven production has been increasing. This has resulted in improved demand for capacity building services such as training, technology adoption and removal of trade barriers.

In her opening remarks, Ms Sabdiyo Dido the Senior Agribusiness and Value Chains Advisor at the CTA urged stakeholders to reflect and deliberate on the donor landscape to analyze trends in development assistance in the region over the past ten years or so. “EAGC and CTA have collaborated on a number of activities in the past “ she added. Among the areas of collaboration has been facilitation of structured grain trade which saw the development of the Structured Grain Trading Systems handbook, Development of harmonized grain standards to promote trade for different countries as well as use of ICT in the grain sector by promoting use of mobile based systems to enhance Market intelligence to reach a large network of farmers.” ICT for Agriculture has enhanced efficiency of information to farmers and traders, eventually strengthening the grain supply chain”added Sabdiyo. Regional stakeholders at the forum discussed the crucial services on offer, challenges and the opportunities as well as key policy gaps across all grain value chain stages which if addressed would boost trade and business opportunities for smallholder farmers.

Of the ten Countries where EAGC operates, two countries in the region namely Kenya and Ethiopia were listed amongst the top 10 recipients of overseas development assistance in 2016. Notably, Burundi, Malawi, Rwanda, South Sudan and Zambia receive about 50% of the funding available to countries such as Tanzania, Ethiopia, Kenya and DR Congo. “This calls for a strategic focus in packaging EAGC’s support to countries that have traditionally attracted less development assistance.” Quipped Mr Olivier Vyuzura, Director of CEREALIS Company in Burundi.

As part of the way forward from the forum, Market access was identified as a key to any production system, which still presents the greatest challenge. EAGC will be well placed to develop a solution at this stage of the chain owing to its strong network of market actors. An EAGC led market access solution will present an investment opportunity at this segment of the chain. Additionally, given the large number of smallholder producers, market information dissemination, especially using mobile platforms, presents a unique farmer engagement opportunity for EAGC and may also be used for capacity building.

Climate Smart Interventions were also identified to reduce the impact of Climate Change in the grain Sector. Diversification of livelihoods, investment in bio-technology, and investment in irrigation projects, adoption of drought tolerant crops like pulses, sorghum, millet as well as management of risks using whether index based insurance were the key interventions identified.

During the day, other partners held side events with the grain stakeholders. The Catholic Relief Services held the Soybean Symposium to sensitize small and large-scale farmers on the soybean trade opportunities while EAGC facilitated the regional trade forum (B2B) supported by one of
the key partners of the 7th African Grain Trade Summit, the USAID-East Africa Trade and Investment Hub (USAID)

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About Eastern Africa Grain Council (EAGC)
The Eastern Africa Grain Council is a regional organization with membership drawn from across the Eastern and Southern Africa. Membership is drawn from grain value chain stakeholders currently with presence in 10 countries across Africa including Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, South Sudan, DRC Congo and Ethiopia.

EAGC’s key products and services include promotion of structured trading system (STS) through the warehouse receipting systems (WRS), and Regional Grain Trading platform (G-Soko), Market Information Systems (MIS) offered through the Regional Agricultural Trade Intelligence Network (RATIN- (www.ratin.net) and evidence-based Policy Advocacy and Training and Capacity Building through the Eastern Africa Grain Institute (EAGI).

About The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA)
The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA) is a joint international institution of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States and the European Union (EU). Central to achieving their mission is CTA’s valued partnerships with ACP national and regional bodies. CTA works with a wide network of ACP-EU public and private sector bodies as well as international organizations around the world.

CTA’s mission is to advance food security, resilience and inclusive economic growth in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific through innovations in sustainable agriculture. CTA’s vision is focuses on smallholder agriculture as a vibrant, modern and sustainable business that creates value for farmers, entrepreneurs, youth and women, and produces affordable, nutritious and healthy food for all.
About the East Africa Trade and Investment Hub (the Hub)

The USAID East Africa Trade and Investment Hub (The Hub) works to boost trade and investment with and within East Africa.

The goal of The Hub is to deepen regional integration, increase the competitiveness of select regional agriculture value chains, promote two-way trade with the U.S. under the African Growth and Opportunity Act and facilitate investment and technology that drives trade growth intra-regionally and to global markets.

About the Catholic Relief Services (CRS)

Catholic Relief Services was founded in 1943 by the Catholic Bishops of the United States to serve World War II survivors in Europe. Since then, CRS has expanded in size to reach more than 120 million people in more than 100 countries on five continents.

CRS mission is to assist impoverished and disadvantaged people overseas, working in the spirit of Catholic social teaching to promote the sacredness of human life and the dignity of the human person. Although the mission is rooted in the Catholic faith, their operations serve people based solely on need, regardless of their race, religion or ethnicity. Within the United States, CRS engages Catholics to live their faith in solidarity with the poor and suffering people of the world.

CRS is motivated by the example of Jesus Christ to ease suffering, provide development assistance, and foster charity and justice. CRS is committed to a set of Guiding Principles and is accountable to each other for them.