PRESS RELEASE

Eastern Africa Grain Council (EAGC) and USAID East Africa Trade & Investment Hub Host Grain Trade Facilitation Forum in Kigali, Rwanda

Grain stakeholders meet to unlock market opportunities for rice and other grains in the region

[Kigali, Rwanda – November 28, 2017]. East Africa’s grain stakeholders convened for a regional trade facilitation meeting in Kigali, Rwanda on 29th November 2017. The forum, which was organized by the EAGC and the USAID East Africa Trade & Investment Hub deliberated on issues impeding the trade of rice and other grains in the East African region. Trade agreements for different grain commodities amounting to over 200,000MT and valued at 80 million dollars were signed.

Rice production within the East African Community (EAC) has been gradually increasing, though it still doesn’t meet market demand, partly due to inadequate market linkages from surplus to deficit regions and unfavorable trade policy. To compensate for the trade deficit, EAC countries import a substantial amount of rice, valued at approximately $500 million a year, from countries in Asia.

The region has significant potential to expand rice production and trade, particularly across national borders. However, the prevailing rice marketing challenges, including informal, inefficient and unstructured markets, coupled with policy constraints and changes in global rice trade dynamics have negatively impacted the rice trade.

Gerald Masila, EAGC’s Executive Director said that the meeting was aimed at offering solutions to increase facilitate a profitable and efficient regional grain trade through networking among the traders for trade deals.

“As part of effectuating cross border trade, a rapid survey on the State of Rice Trade in the East African Community informed deliberations on impeding issues on rice trade with a view of coming up with effective recommendations to unlock the potential in rice trade”, Mr Masila stated.

A number of policy reforms have been implemented to incentivize domestic rice production and trade across national borders with the EAC, including but not limited to the introduction of the 75% Common External Tariff aimed at protecting domestic rice producers from external competition. Despite the importance of cross-border trade in rice, such trade continues to face a number of tariff and non-tariff barriers that contravenes the spirit of regional integration and threatens to undermine regional food security.

The USAID East Africa Trade and Investment Hub supports the development and implementation of long-term strategies to address rice trading constraints within its larger project goal of improving food security in the region.

Grain producers, traders and policy makers deliberated on inhibiting tariff and non-tariff barriers prevailing among the EAC Partners States and came up with actionable recommendations that would strengthen rice regional cross-border trade from areas of surplus to those experiencing a deficit. Initiatives on rice trade and investment in the subsector will be expected to create rice market opportunities that offer enhanced opportunities for trade and investment.

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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](http://www.ratin.net)) and evidence-based Policy Advocacy and Training and Capacity Building through the Eastern Africa Grain Institute (EAGI).

**About the USAID East Africa Trade and Investment Hub**
The USAID East Africa Trade and Investment Hub (the Hub) partners with East African and U.S. businesses to attract investment that transforms the East African private sector into vibrant global trading partners. The Hub also promotes a more predictable, transparent and enabling business environment in East Africa by supporting adherence to intra-regional and international trade agreements and conformity to international standards. Improving the region’s trade competitiveness, encouraging the diversification of exports beyond natural resources, and promoting broader, more-inclusive economic growth will lead to more food secure and resilient East African communities.

[www.eatradehub.org](http://www.eatradehub.org)

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