**PRESS RELEASE**

Eastern Africa Grain Council (EAGC) Launches 9 East African Standards for Staple Foods, among other 106 EAC harmonized standards

Smooth adoption and implementation of grain standards and grades expected to promote intra-regional trade following the recent gazettement of EAC Standards for Staple Foods.

[Nairobi, Kenya -20 December 2017]. Grain trade in the East Africa region is set to increase following the gazettement of the 9 product standards for staple foods and 2 standards for sampling and test methods. Speaking at the forum, EAGC Executive Director, Mr. Gerald Masila said that the application of the gazetted standards, famers will access better and larger markets, while consumers will be provided with safe and high quality food grain products. The gazetted East African standards, which will be domesticated in each EAC Partner States, were launched and handed over for implementation during the Eastern Africa Grain Council end of year Members’ Forum held on Wednesday, 20th December 2017, at the InterContinental Hotel in Nairobi.

Officiating the forum, Ms. Betty Maina, Principal Secretary, State Department of EAC Integration, Ministry of Labour & EAC said that “the East African Community Standards for Cereals and Pulses were first gazetted by the EAC in 2013. She added that the 2013 standards was a critical step towards addressing key obstacles to formal structured trading systems that require consistency and standardization of products quality”.

However, a number of challenges, with regard to the application of the standards, were experienced soon after the adoption in 2014. To address the issues, EAGC embarked on investigation of the prevailing challenges affecting the 2013 standards implementation, and conducted a regional survey covering three components: review of existing technical gaps, grain laboratories benchmarking and cross border assessment. The survey revealed a number of gaps including some safety and quality requirements/parameters, sampling and testing methods as key constraints limiting the realization of Structured Grain Trade within the Region. These gaps necessitated a review, a process that has culminated to the new revised harmonized 2017 EAC Staple foods standards.

The nine priority product standards reviewed were maize grain, wheat grain, milled rice, dry beans, dry soybeans, maize flour, wheat flour, sorghum flour and millet flour. Some of the parameters addressed through the revision of the standards were moisture content levels, discolouration of grains, aflatoxin among others. EAGC, with support from Development partners including Swedish International Development Agency, Sida, USAID, DFID/FoodTrade, CTA among others, has been partnering with the EAC in the standards harmonization process for Cereals, Pulses, and their products since 2010 and has mobilized and committed resources, and grain stakeholder participation in the process.
“The Gazetted revised Standards will become legally binding in all partner States six months after publication in the gazette. This will be a great effort to facilitate Intra-Regional grain trade by reducing Standards-related Technical Barriers to Grain Trade that had previously hampered such trade.” Quipped Ms Betty Maina, the Principal Secretary for East Africa Community Affairs. Speaking at the forum, the Principal Secretary, State Department for Trade, Dr Chris Kiptoo shared the Government’s vision for trade in the next 5 years, which, among other priorities will promote 100% food security & Nutrition in Kenya. The PS called upon EAGC as a key partner to continue working closely with the Government in the implementation of the grain standards and in advising on diversification to other grains to reduce the demand for maize for human food and animal feeds.

“EAGC plans to undertake capacity building and awareness forums in each country and to work with the EAC and National Bureaus of Standards to develop National standards implementation roadmaps as we call upon the EAC partner states to move with speed to ensure effective implementation” Lauded Mr Masila. “A scorecard approach and a regular market surveillance will be much needed as the next step as a mechanism to track overall implementation of the standards,” he added. He further added that “the EAGC’s regional grain trading system, which is a web, based /electronic system known as G-SOKO will also promote the adoption of the revised EAC standards through the certified warehouses which have a role of bulking grains that conform with the quality parameters”.

Mr. Masila appreciated the various partners and stakeholders who were involved in the harmonization and review of the grain standards led by the East African Community (EAC) Secretariat, including the Bureau of Standards for Kenya, (KeBS), Tanzania (TBS), Burundi (BBN), Rwanda (RSB), and Uganda (UNBS ). The USAID –East Africa Trade and Investment Hub (The Hub) supported the review of the Standards as well as the UKAID- Food Trade Eastern and Southern Africa (FTESA) who supported the Regional Standards Survey, National Consultations, Standards Awareness at farmer Level and Graders Training.
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).

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