Communique on EAGC Virtual launch of the Climate Information for Grains (Ci4G), and the Launch of the Virtual EAGC Regional Agribusiness Expo and Symposium, held on 28th October, 2020 on Microsoft Teams.

PREAMBLE

The Eastern Africa Grain Council (EAGC), on the 28th October, 2020, hosted a Members and Stakeholder meeting to launch the Climate Information for Grains (Ci4G) and the EAGC Virtual Agribusiness Expo and Symposium. The launch event was conducted virtually in adherence to the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines on the management of COVID-19 and as a precautionary measure to reduce the risk of spreading the disease. The launch was attended by media representatives, EAGC partners, members and agribusiness stakeholders among them farmers, inputs providers, machinery and equipment, banking and insurance. The organizations represented in the launch include: The Climate Development Knowledge Network (4); Indo Global SME Chamber – India (2), Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa – Rwanda, Volkswagen Mobility Solutions – Rwanda; IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre
Launch of the Climate Information for Grains (Ci4G)

The Eastern Africa Grain Council (EAGC) with support from the Climate & Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) has been implementing a project aimed at reducing post-harvest losses and increasing grain production through the mitigation of climate change effects in Kenya and Uganda, in partnership with the IGAD Climate Prediction and Application Centre (ICPAC), Kenya National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) and Uganda Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAIFF).

A value chain needs assessment conducted at the start of the project established that there was a need for real time climate information that includes precipitation, temperatures, and wind speed availed nearest to the value chain actors’ locations.

To address these needs, EAGC developed a Ci4G Tool which is a platform for collating and disseminating Climate Information for Grains which provides area specific climate information as well as related crop advisories currently for maize, beans, sorghum, and green grams value chains, as one of the services in the EAGC Grain Trade Business Hubs (GHUBs). The GHUBs are a one stop center owned and operated by smallholder farmer groups which facilitate their access to farm inputs such as seeds, fertilizer, mechanization, trainings and information for market and climate, as well as aggregating their produce and selling collectively through the EAGC’s GSOKO grain trading system.

Preliminary feedback so far received from the value chain actors indicate that they have been able to take appropriate action using the crop advisories received through the EAGC Ci4G platform such as when to prepare for planting or harvesting, drying e.t.c and therefore helping them reduce transaction costs and post-harvest losses, while at the same time creating market opportunities for their produce. The EAGC Ci4G tool is accessible on www.ci4g.net.

The event was therefore an opportunity to present the Ci4G tool to EAGC members and stakeholders and to receive feedback on areas of improvement.

Launch of the EAGC Virtual Agribusiness Expo and Symposium (ABFS)

Each year, EAGC hosts physical annual Agribusiness Expos in Eastern Africa through which agribusiness stakeholders including farmers, inputs providers, machinery and equipment, banking, insurance, telecommunication, among others interact with prospective clients thus unlocking business opportunities.

This year, due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the 2020 Annual Expo will be held virtually. The event will feature exhibitors at their locations and is expected to reach thousands of agribusiness stakeholders across the region, resulting to demand driven products and services to meet consumer requirements and to boost company sales.
The objectives of the Agribusiness Expo and Symposium are to:

i. Facilitate players in agri-industry to create business contacts and explore new business opportunities

ii. Empower farmers and other stakeholders through capacity building and training on new innovations, technologies and access to new knowledge

iii. Provide opportunities for exhibitors to showcase and sell their products and or services to a wide range of stakeholders

Enable stakeholders to engage with County and National Governments on policy issues

**Remarks by the EAGC Executive Director, Mr. Gerald Masila**

In his opening remarks, EAGC Executive Director, Mr. Gerald Masila:

**WELCOMED** the stakeholders to the meeting and **APPRECIATED** them for honoring EAGC’s invite in making strides towards meeting the needs of grain value chain actors in an effective manner.

**HIGHLIGHTED** the key four pillars of EAGC as the provision of trade facilitation services through the EAGC G-Soko Grain Trading System; market and cross-border trade information through the Regional Agricultural Trade Intelligence Network; pursuing appropriate policy reforms to support growth of structured grain trade through the Agricultural Trade Policy Advisory Expo for Eastern and Southern Africa; and capacity building of grain industry stakeholders through the Grain Business Institute (GBI).

**RECOGNIZED** the partnership with CDKN in the development of the tool in meeting stakeholder needs more so those of the Small Holder Farmers who are the pillars of the grain value chain by seeking to enhance resilience and sustainability at the production level.

**INFORMED** the stakeholders that while there are several climate information providers in the market, EAGC has opted for a unique approach in the delivery of the service to the farmers through EAGC’s Grain Trade Hubs, that are a one stop information centers that are owned and operated by smallholder farmer groups.

**EMPHASIZED** that use of the G Hubs facilitates faster, efficient and effective dissemination of information specific to the user needs since the formation of G Hubs involves the profiling of farmers’ needs as well as that of G Hubs, enabling an appropriate and timely response. G Hubs also facilitate access to farm inputs, capacity building, market information, grain aggregation and bulk grain selling through the EAGC’s GSOKO grain trading system.
Remarks by the Suzzane Carter, Climate Development Knowledge Network

CDKN Africa's Senior Programme Manager, Suzanne Carter in her opening remarks highlighted the role of the Ci4G tool in enhancing food security in the region. Ms. Carter:

STATED that, with future weather information at hand, the climate information for grains will empower farmers and other value chain sectors in the grain sector by enabling them to appropriately plan their activities in the short term

EXPRESSED optimism in the better use of the tool in both the short term and long-term weather climate information to attain increased grain trade and improved food security in the region despite the recurrent threats of climate change.

NOTED that weather and climate services are increasingly making use of a more user centered approach to meet user needs. The project assessed the needs and preferences of value chain grain actors which informed the kind of tool to roll out and the extent to which the tool will be put to maximum use.

THANKED the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Netherlands and Inter Development Centre in Canada, funders of CDKN which supporting EAGC in the development of the tool and enabling that farmers to utilize the information to meet their needs.

Remarks by John Mwangi - National Drought Management Authority

The Drought Information Manager, National Drought Management Authority, Mr. John Mwangi, in his remarks:

INTRODUCED the National Drought Management Authority as a state corporation operating in twenty-three counties in Kenya, coordinating the country’s efforts in the management of risks arising from droughts and the adaptation to climate change for sustainable livelihoods. Key functions of the Authority include:

- Maintaining early warning systems
- Assessment and coordination of food security at national and county level
- Monitoring of livestock and crop production in counties
- Dissemination of information

GRATEFUL for partnering with EAGC in the development of the tool in the implementation of the reduction of post-harvest losses and increasing grain production in Kenya and Uganda while building on the government’s efforts in improving food security.
COMMENDED EAGC for the initiative to enhance food security and build on a strategy to end food emergency in the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development bloc, which is prone to food insecurity due to the effect of multiple droughts.

COMMITTED to continue collaborating with EAGC and partners in providing solutions that meet agriculture sector needs in an effort to respond to climate change.

Remarks by Kenneth Kemucie - IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre

Mr. Kenneth Kemucie, ICPAC’s Thematic Assistant, GMES & Africa, in his remarks:

INTRODUCED IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre (ICPAC) as an institution mandated to generate climate information for crops to improve food security in the Eastern Africa region.

RECOGNIZED the partnership between EAGC and ICPAC under an MoU where the two institutions work together by integrating climate and grain market information to develop demand driven communication to stakeholders to influence informed trade and policy decision.

APPRECIATED EAGC for provision of timely market and trade related information through the monitoring of informal cross border trade of food commodities in Eastern Africa to inform on the impact on regional food security.

NOTED that ICPAC has enabled access to historical weather information particularly on precipitation dating back from 1981 to date, and consideration is underway to integrate historical data with the advisories that are generated.

NOTED that the Ci4G tool is very useful in the application of climate and weather-related science having brought in the aspect of value addition that has necessitated the shift from the application of raw science to meeting user needs in the grain value chain through crop advisories.

COMMITTED to continue partnering with EAGC towards keeping the Ci4G tool alive by providing real time climate information for the benefit of grain value chain actors.
Remarks from EAGC partners on the upcoming Agribusiness Expo and Symposium

Ms. Barbara Mbabazi, Associate Program Officer Agribusiness and Extension, Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA), Rwanda:

**COMMENDED** EAGC and the partners for the launch of the Ci4G tool which integrates technology in the agricultural system

**NOTED** that AGRA in Rwanda is working on the production of quality seed that is quick maturing and adaptive to climate change, which is building on the tool’s objective to combat post harvest losses arising from climate change.

**POINTED OUT** that EAGC in partnership with AGRA is implementing a project on combating aflatoxin through capacity building of farmers on post-harvest handling and market linkages, and therefore the launch of the tool is timely in helping stakeholders to make informed decisions to reduce on post-harvest losses.

**STATED** that the upcoming expo will largely contribute to AGRA’s objectives and interventions of market linkage and exposing value chain stakeholders particularly Small Holder Farmers to various opportunities such as access to finance, farm inputs and wider markets.

**COMMITTED** to continue partnering with EAGC in promoting structured grain trading systems in Rwanda and in the implantation of projects towards the elimination of aflatoxin contamination in the country.

Remarks by Dr. Bharat Kulkarni - Indo Global SME Chamber

The Indo Global SME Chamber is collaborating with EAGC to host the Online trade facilitation and market linkages to promote trade opportunities between Eastern Africa agribusiness value chain stakeholders and their counterparts in India.

The Chairman Indo Global SME Chamber, Dr. Bharat Kulkarni:

**INFORMED** that the Indo Global SME Chamber is a chamber of commerce that provides a dynamic link for the promotion of business relations between SMEs in India and different countries across the globe.

**STATED** that the objective of the chamber is to bring together global SMEs to identify new areas of cooperation and ensure smooth flow of trade between various stakeholders.
APPRECIATED the opportunity to partner with EAGC in the Agribusiness Expo to provide technological market linkage between India and East Africa in a more transparent and secure manner.

POINTED OUT that India is one of the largest economies with agricultural technological innovations that are adaptable, acceptable and affordable in Africa since small holder farmers in Africa identify with challenges experienced by Indian small holder farmers.

**Demonstration of the Ci4G Tool**

Mr. Allan Kiprop, the lead Ci4G tool developer, highlighted the presented the Ci4G tool to EAGC members and stakeholders. Mr. Kiprop:  
**STATED THAT:**  
- The tool is a web and short message service-based platform.  
- The objective of the tool is to provide climate advisories to farmers on selected locations.  
- The weather information is centered on G Hubs, where the information is derived from a radius of 9 miles from the G Hub, captured though GPS coordinates.  
- There are 13 G Hubs; 9 in Kenya, 2 in Uganda, and 2 in Rwanda.

- Crop advisories are relayed based on the stage of the crop ranging from land preparation to crop harvesting and post-harvest.
- Crop advisories are three in nature:  
  - Agronomical  
  - Logistical and trade  
  - Post-harvest management.
- Short Message Services(SMS) are broadcast on a weekly basis to the G Hubs, sending broadcast messages to users based on the tool directory.

**ILLUSTRATED:**

The Home page consists of:

A. **Climate Smart Directory** that provides climate smart directory companies that include farm input service providers, financial products and insurance, post handling services, climate smart mechanization services and energy conservation solutions among others.
Steps:
1. The user searches the company that provides the service of interest as illustrated above.
2. Links to the company through the provided contacts.

Database of service providers

B. Weather Forecast and Advisories
Steps:
User picks the commodity such as maize at harvesting, the crop stage and the G Hub, to get weather forecast and advisory:

Selection of crop of interest at a particular stage
I NFORMED that extension officers post advisories for their location on a weekly basis, as the advisories expire shortly after.

Demonstration of Ci4G as a service under the EAGC GHUB Model

Ms. Janet Ngombalu, EAGC Regional Programs Coordinator, presented the Ci4G tool as a service of the EAGC Grain Trade Business Hub (GHUB). In her presentation, she:

HIGHLIGHTED that Ci4G is anchored under the Grain Trade Business Hubs which are a one stop center owned and operated by smallholder farmer groups which facilitate their access to farm inputs such as seeds, fertilizer, mechanization, trainings and information for market and climate.
Farmers also aggregate their produce in the G Hubs and sell collectively through the EAGC’s GSOKO grain trading system.

**HIGHLIGHTED** that Ci4G is anchored under the Grain Trade Business Hubs which are a one stop center owned and operated by smallholder farmer groups which facilitate their access to farm inputs such as seeds, fertilizer, mechanization, trainings and information for market and climate. Farmers also aggregate their produce in the G Hubs and sell collectively through the EAGC’s GSOKO grain trading system.

**NOTED** that the farmers in the G Hub were registered through an online tool which is accessible in the database.

**STATED** that farmers and other stakeholders are linked to all service providers such as agriculture farm input suppliers, equipment and machinery, financial and insurance service providers, as well as actors in the grain value chain including bulk buyers of grain that provide the farmers with practical solutions informed by crop advisories.
FURTHER STATED that climate advisories are linked to climate smart technology providers that provide farmers with information on climate smart inputs such as seed variety, climate smart post-harvest technologies, advisory for climate change behavioral change, climate smart financing, linkage to market information and trade facilitation.

Launch of the EAGC Virtual Agribusiness Expo and Symposium

The Regional MIS and Communications Manager, Ms. Jacinta Mwau, presented to the stakeholders the upcoming EAGC Virtual Agribusiness Expo and Symposium that is scheduled to take place on the 24th to 25th November. In her presentation, Ms. Jacinta:

INFORMED that the Agribusiness Expo and Symposium is an annual EAGC event that convenes agribusiness stakeholders across Eastern Africa including farmers, inputs providers, machinery and equipment, banking, insurance and telecommunication to interact with their prospective clients to unlock business opportunities.

POINTED OUT that this year, due to the COVID-19 restrictions, the 2020 Annual Expo will be held virtually, presenting a very cost-effective way of convening stakeholders. The Expo will feature exhibitors at their locations and is expected to reach thousands of agribusiness stakeholders, given that participation across the region will be remote.

NOTED that the Agribusiness Expo will feature the theme “Climate Smart Agribusiness Value Chains for Sustainable Food Trade in Eastern Africa” as the Expo takes a holistic, systemic view of the risks and impacts of climate change. The theme will focus on:

✓ Climate change and its associated risks
✓ The need to develop climate change adoption mechanisms
✓ Analyzing climate change risks, and strategizing on mitigation and adaption
✓ Developing climate smart agribusiness value chains for sustainable food trade and regional food security

HIGHLIGHTED that the event is open to global participation, with the key participating countries being Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zambia and Malawi. Event planning at each country will take into consideration the local context needs, benefits and expectations of all stakeholders at country level.

INFORMED the Virtual Agribusiness Expo highlights as:

- A virtual Agribusiness Arena
- Equipment & Machinery display – Products display
- Virtual symposium with thematic sessions chaired/moderated by industry experts
- Live chat for networking and creating business opportunities from all over the world
- Online market linkages and trade facilitation
POINTED OUT that the Expo will feature virtual components as follows:

- **Live streaming** via the EAGC YouTube and Facebook channels
- **Digital Pavilion** for visitors to handle products in 3D rendered in 360-degree panoramic photographs
- **Online B2B** grain trade facilitation meetings between buyers and suppliers
- **Live radio and TV Coverage** where partnering media houses in Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda will air the show live for about 2-3 hours per day.
- **Virtual tour** of exhibition arena and farmers businesses
- **Live Chat** and interaction between visitors and service providers (both general and direct/private interactive chat window)
- **Product launches** to meet exhibitors’ demand for international marketing and buyers' procurement needs.
- **Online Live Presentations** and remarks from experts in the agribusiness sector

OUTLINED the objectives of the Agribusiness Expo and Symposium as:

- Explore new opportunities by facilitating players in agri-industry to create business contacts
- Capacity building and training to empower farmers and other stakeholders through training on new innovations, technologies and access to new knowledge
- Providing trade opportunities for exhibitors to showcase and sell their products and or services to a wide range of stakeholder
- Enable engagement with policy makers at National and regional Governments in regards to policy issues
- Promoting resilience for all participants to thrive amid COVID 19 impact to businesses
CALLED UPON the stakeholders to seize the opportunity and participate in the Expo to adopt sustainable and resilient climate smart practices; and to bridge the trade and market linkage gap by exploring opportunities through the online market and trade facilitation service.

**Feedback from members and stakeholders**

Members and stakeholders gave their feedback as follows:

✓ There is a need to add a visual map of the G Hub locations to the tool to help identify the geographical locations of the G Hubs
✓ The Ci4G tool should be indicative of the specific geographical locations such as county wards to enable users to identify the location of service providers
✓ The tool should be user friendly to users beyond the tool system for effective interaction

**Recommendations from engagement with members and stakeholders**

The meeting proposed the following next steps:

- Members and stakeholders to interact with the tool and provide feedback to allow EAGC to assess the usefulness of the tool for further improvement
- EAGC to scale up the utilization of the Ci4G tool beyond Kenya, Uganda and Rwanda to serve all stakeholders in the ten EAGC mandate countries
The Eastern Africa Grain Council (EAGC) is a membership-based organization representing the grain sector in Eastern and Southern Africa. The Council exists to facilitate efficient, structured, profitable and inclusive grain trade in its 10 mandate countries, namely Kenya (Regional Headquarters), Uganda, Tanzania, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Burundi, Rwanda, Zambia, Malawi and the Democratic Republic of Congo. EAGC draws its membership from grain sector value chain actors in its Member States, which include farmers, traders and processors. Support service providers and complimentary sectors such as agro-input suppliers, financial services and animal feed manufacturers also form part of the Membership.

In facilitating structured grain trade in the Eastern Africa region, EAGC provides trade facilitation services through the EAGC G-Soko Grain Trading System; market and cross-border trade information through the Regional Agricultural Trade Intelligence Network (RATIN - www.ratin.net); pursuing appropriate policy reforms to support growth of structured grain trade through the Agricultural Trade Policy Advisory Forum for Eastern and Southern Africa (ATPAF-ESA); and capacity building of grain industry stakeholders through the Grain Business Institute (GBI).

For more information, please feel free to contact the EAGC Secretariat through the addresses below:

EASTERN AFRICA GRAIN COUNCIL
REGIONAL OFFICE
Mbaazi Avenue, off Kingara Road, Lavington,
P.O. Box 218-00606, NAIROBI, KENYA
Tel: +254 20 374 5840/733 444 035/710 607 313
Email: grains@eagc.org Web: www.eagc.org/www.ratin.net