

Advocacy for Systems Approach to Agricultural Policy

Systems Approach to Vegetable Value Chain Policy in the Light of COVID-19 and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement

Intersectoral and Inter-ministerial coordination

Ensuring more beneficial local policies at national level before leveraging on continental trade benefits against risking for losses associated with trade, competition and infant local industries.

Formalizing the informal small-holder farmer communities to capacitate them to satisfy food sufficiency needs beyond domestic demands to guarantee sustained supply chains at the continental level. National Operational Strategy for Food Security and Agricultural Development

Digitizing Agricultural Systems to Attract the Youth

For businesses who export at harvest and import during lean seasons, COVID-19 teaches us to do better than seasonal approaches to consider staggered production systems to guarantee local food sufficiency. The alternative approach is through an organized national food production and food security strategy.

To provide comparative and competitive advantages, AfCFTA needs to have in place lists of food items/products to be exported/imported. Some countries export agricultural produce during rainy season and import the same in their dry season at a higher price. With COVID-19, some of these countries could have found themselves in a season of need, yet they cannot import—a lesson to consider for future policies. The need for coordination is revealed in the fact that while farmers dependent on export market failed and experienced as much as 500% reduction in prices, there were so many markets with shortages and very high prices for vegetables. We need policies which would enable vegetables to be stored under cold storage systems for at least a year to ensure effective price control value chain system implementation so that surpluses could go into continental markets. We need to demonstrate enough storage capacity to guarantee local food security before going into continental and international trade and exports as host to the AfCFTA. COVID-19 also shows us that innovation approaches are needed to providing extension, training, insurance, financing to farmers and actors along commodity value chains.

For national agricultural policies to be robust to take advantage of AfCFTA agreement, complementary policies are needed in the area of sanitary and phytosanitary measures (SPS). The

removal of technical barriers to trade (TBT) need to be prioritized. We need to pursue trade facilitation arrangements and promote compliance to the requirements of International Standard Setting Bodies such as Codex Alimentarius Commission and introduce a simplified and harmonized trade regime, especially for cross-border agricultural trade.

Adopting systems approach become necessary to dealing with challenges in vegetable value chain, including post-harvest losses, increased competitive pressure, adverse working conditions and job losses, tariff escalation, youth and gender gaps in access t and use of productive inputs and services, and environmental damage from unregulated growth.

The desk reviews and focus group research undertaken by AHEFS continue to reveal a need for new policies for vegetable value chain that facilitate national and continental trade, intersectoral and inter-ministerial coordination of value chain demand and supply factors, effective fiscal resource allocation, and programmatic monitoring and evaluation. The need for appropriate technology to transform agriculture across Africa starting with national polices are paramount. Modes of interaction between and among farmers, investors, extension agents; input dealers; banks; insurance providers; produce buyers, and standards certifying institutions need to change. A means to disseminate climate and seasonally relevant meteorological information to vegetable producers need to be explored.