

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

Press Release No: 000/2021

Date: 02 December 2021

Venue: Durban, South Africa

AU- Common African Agro-Parks Programme (CAAPs) proposed as an Agenda 2063 Flagship Programme for the next 10 Years Implementation Plan.

The Department of Agriculture, Rural Development Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment of the AUC in collaboration with the African Export Import Bank (Afrexim Bank), the Secretariat of the Africa Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), and the Forum for Agricultural Research in Africa (FARA) organized the Second meeting of the Common African Agro-Parks (CAAPs) Steering Committee (CAAPs-SC) on at the margin of the Intra-African Trade Fair in Durban (IATF 2021), Durban South Africa. The meeting was held on 18th November 2021 in Durban, South Africa.

In line with the mandate of the CAAPs-SC to initiate the necessary high-level engagement to building broader cooperation amongst AU member states and stakeholders for fast-tracking implementation of the CAAPs, this 2nd biannual meeting of the CAAPs-SC is organized with the objective to reflect on the progress of implementation of the CAAPs activities and the actions planned ahead for the CAAPs coordination organs (CAAPs-TCT and CAAPs-SC); and to endorse the CAAPs report and recommendations for onward submission to the Fourth Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee (STC) on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment (ARDWE) scheduled for 13th - 17th December 2021.

In his opening remarks, Amb. Albert Muchanga, the Commissioner for Economic Development, Trade, Industry, and Mining of the African Union Commission (AUC), who represented H.E. Amb. Josefa Sacko, AU Commissioner, Agriculture, Rural Development Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment, emphasized the need for the CAAPs-SC to be set-up as an actionable platform. He noted that experiences from the past have shown our weaknesses that are characterised by a length of statements and ceremonies instead of focusing on concrete actions, which are sometimes coupled with high number of targets in our commitments and declarations that have not been achieved. He urged the participants to learn from the past and take on an action-oriented approach to implement the CAAPs programme.

The President of Afrexim Bank, H.E. Prof Benedict Oramah, was represented by Mrs Oluranti Doherty, Director of Export Development of the Afrexim Bank, in her messages she reiterated the commitment of the Bank to support the CAAPs initiative and confirmed that a grand total of 500,000 USD will be disbursed for 2022 to 2023 to support the CAAPs-Secretariat at FARA for capacity building activities of the CAAPs.

Dr Yemi Akinbami, Executive Director of FARA addressed the committee and pointed out that there is need to restate the mandate of CAAPs-SC and enlighten the spectrum of partnerships required as well as the leadership engagement strategy of the CAAPs. He also presented a roadmap to the CAAPs-SC members in implementing the CAAPs leadership engagement activities.

H.E Wamkele Mene, the Secretary General of the AfCFTA, was represented by Mr Komla Bissi, Senior Advisor at AfCFTA, He stressed the need to move straight into business while avoiding

heavy processes that may take too much time. “We can start something concrete based on what we already know, for example, we know the facts and the political environment of the cocoa sector, and we may not need to wait for an establishment of a financing mechanism before developing the cocoa-CAAP” he added. He also stressed that a schedule should be put in place in order to quickly start the CAAPs and allow it to happen in our lifetime.

In her remarks, Dr Janet Edeme, Head of Rural Development Division of the AUC and the Chair of the CAAPs Technical Coordination Team (CAAPs-TCT), presented the CAAPs progress report, and the draft decisions prepared for consideration the 4th Ordinary Session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment of the African Union.

She further pointed out that the CAAPs will be developed on a continental scale similarly to AU PIDA programme. With the CAAPs, Africa will generate considerable quantum of foods to serve the inter-African trade of food commodities within the AfCFTA. We need to intensify the production systems with adequate logistics chains in Africa to make best use of the economy of scale in order to be competitive with the external markets. The Africa’s food scenario is really worrying, and if we do not do anything, nobody will do it for us.

A way forward and actions were proposed as follows;

- The CAAPs shall be submitted as a Flagship Project of the Agenda 2063 for the next 10 Years Implementation Plan 2023-2033.
- Refine the CAAPs Institutional Models and Leadership Engagement Strategy to include the orientations provided at this 2nd CAAPs-SC meeting
- The CAAPs -TCT to engage with the Office of the Commissioner for Economic Development, Trade, Industry, and Mining of the African Union Commission to reach out to the President of African Business Council on the submission made on Private Sector Engagement.
- The Afrexim bank’s Grant Agreement and the MoUs to be signed in at the 4th STC.

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