OVERVIEW OF THE AGROTOBACCO SECTOR

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More specifically, tobacco farming is an essential component of agriculture supporting poverty alleviation, livelihoods, economic development and trade in the COMESA region.

There is however still limited understanding of the actual impact of the tobacco farming and its real effect on livelihood and economic development in the region, more so at farmer level. This adversely affects policy making processes related to the tobacco industry at national, regional and international levels. It is important that both businesses and governments are fully informed through research on the tobacco farming footprint in the region as this is critical to ensure the long-term sustainability of the sector.

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We are delighted to bring to you this series, filled with the latest trends and developments in the agro-industry sector across the region, along with key information on upcoming events, market intelligence, and policy and regulatory issues.

Thank you for being part of this exciting journey; the best is yet to come!

Sandra Uwera, CEO, COMESA Business Council

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ABOUT THE WORKGROUP

In 2017 CBC formed the Tobacco Workgroup, a sector-sub committees under the agro-industry workgroup; it is a coalition of tobacco industry stakeholders with a mandate to advocate, promote linkages, growth and competitiveness of the sector within COMESA.

With the objective of providing an informed assessment of the industry, to ensure informed advocacy processes, CBC has developed the Tobacco Sustainability in Africa Report, A Business Outlook on the Social, Economic and Environmental Impact of Tobacco Farming in the Eastern and Southern African Regions.

The 2018-2019 study has involved multi-stakeholder consultations with farmer associations, tobacco companies, tobacco research institution, regulatory boards, and government.

Some of the industry challenges identified are:

- Illicit trade that is defrauding governments of much needed taxes
- Difficulty in maintaining competitive costs of production
- Poor road network infrastructure
- Limited access to finance due to lack of collateral and the exorbitant charges associated with commercial loans
- Lack of clear national regulatory framework which tobacco growing counties can align with.

What other issues would you like to see us address? We’ll be picking up this conversation on Twitter; follow us and lets keep talking!

WORKGROUP OBJECTIVES

Through this Workgroup, CBC provides the following services to its stakeholders:

- Development and dissemination of evidence-based research;
- Harmonization of positions and presentation to the COMESA policy organs meetings;
- Facilitation of business and market linkages through our Market Pointers, Market Briefs, and BizNet, our online market portal;
- Building the capacities of enterprises and associations;
- Establishing sustainable private and public-private partnerships amongst industry stakeholders across COMESA;
- Provision of advertising and branding opportunities on our website, publications and at our events.

INDUSTRY NEWS:

- ITGA celebrates World Tobacco Growers' Day, highlighting tobacco growers' contribution to their communities and economies. [Link]
- "We want our tobacco to be sold in COMESA countries." - Tanzania Agriculture Deputy Minister, Hussein Bashe. [Link]
- New Monetary Policy Threatens the Future of Tobacco Farming in Zimbabwe. [Link]
- Malawi tobacco farmers told to align themselves on new tobacco law: [Link]
- Cigarette prices in Rwanda double following tax revisions. [Link]
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