

ACTIVITY BRIEF | OCTOBER 25, 2021

Public-private dialogue outlines steps to improve Uganda's competitiveness in regional agricultural trade

Conversations and strategic action on agriculture trade competitiveness have become an urgent priority for Uganda in the face of disrupted supply chains and the grave impact on Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) due to COVID-19 pandemic, increasing food deficits in regional food trade, and the economic integration opportunities presented by the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCTA). To this end, USAID/Kenya and East Africa's (KEA) Feed the Future (FtF) Policy LINK is working with partners, leading multi stakeholder dialogue and action in several East Africa countries to drive change in agriculture trade.

On October 14, in collaboration with the Government of Uganda, Uganda Agribusiness Alliance, the National Planning Authority (NPA), Uganda Development Forum, FtF East Africa Market Systems ("E.A. Market Systems") project, Venture 37- Trade in Agriculture Safely and Efficiently (TRASE) project, USAID KEA's FtF Policy LINK¹ co-convoked the Uganda Public-Private Dialogue under the theme, **Exploring Uganda's Competitiveness in Regional Agricultural Trade**.

The hybrid meeting saw 64 participants join virtually, while 15 participants were hosted physically at the National Planning Authority (NPA) boardroom in Kampala, Uganda. They included representatives drawn from Ugandan government ministries, departments and agencies, the USAID Uganda Mission, development partners supporting agriculture and trade in the country, national and regional private sector, and agribusiness organizations.

The key objectives were to:

1. Reflect on the implications of the competitiveness analysis findings and build consensus around critical issues and actions to improve the country's trade competitiveness.

TAGS

USAID KEA; USAID Uganda; Agricultural Trade Competitiveness

WHAT'S THE STORY?

Public and private stakeholders in Uganda agree on and commit to strategic actions to increase the country's agricultural trade competitiveness.

WHY IT MATTERS

Uganda has always been known as the bread basket of Africa, inviting the assumption that for the country, cross-border trade is not only efficient, but that it puts the East African nation in the best stead to compete with other agricultural giants. The numbers tell a different story. Recent SPS issues that disrupted trade between Uganda and its neighbour calls for urgent attention to address these barriers.

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¹ USAID KEA is supporting the Strengthening Competitiveness in Regional Agricultural Trade (SCRAT) Activity being implemented by the USAID/KEA's Feed the Future Policy LINK program. As part of this activity, Policy LINK, in partnership with other US Govt IPs ("E.A. Market Systems" and TRASE) has started facilitating dialogues in partnership with key stakeholders to reflect on the analysis of findings of countries' agriculture trade competitiveness, prioritize key issues and strategic actions or solutions to address constraints. One regional dialogue (East Africa) and five national dialogues (Uganda, Kenya, DRC, Ethiopia, and Zambia) are planned for the last quarter of 2021 and early 2022.

2. Prioritize country level strategic intervention, approaches, joint actions, and partnerships to address systemic issues in a timely manner and improve Uganda's trade competitiveness.
3. Strengthen a platform for future broader stakeholder collaboration, dialogue, and action to address trade challenges affecting Uganda.

The dialogue was officially opened by Dr Joseph Muvawala, Executive Director, NPA, and Hon. Victoria Sekitoleko, Chairperson, UAA. This was followed by presentation of a synthesis of issues for Uganda Trade Competitiveness from studies and analyses from the [Policy LINK competitiveness analysis](#), [TRASE's East Africa Community \(EAC\) legal and SPS systems assessments](#), and [E.A Market Systems Market Assessments for the Cereals, Legumes, Horticulture and Livestock value chains](#), and thereafter a public private dialogue with key speakers including the NPA, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Finance, dairy private sector actors, laboratory owners, and grain actors.

Participants reflected on varied challenges including low productivity, poor infrastructure, poor grading and storage lack of harmonized quality and SPS standards, market inefficiency and low diversification, lack of quality and reliable data and information, low private sector investment, competition issues, trade barriers, and Non-Tariff Barriers (NTBs) that impedes Uganda's trade competitiveness.

To improve Agricultural Trade Competitiveness, there was consensus that Uganda needs to industrialize its agriculture sector by creating enabling environment for Uganda industries to thrive (e.g. reducing cost of doing business by lowering power tariff and interest rates), invest in infrastructure and agro-processing, investing in data quality as well as a digitization and accountability platform, invest in/ increase funding for regulations and standards, enhance off-take capacity, strengthen public-private sector partnerships and institutionalize dialogue.

Based on the priority actions from the Dialogue, as an immediate step, Policy LINK, UAA, TRASE and the E.A Markey System Program will facilitate follow-on engagements with partners on identified actions. beginning with: (i) strengthening the existing multi-stakeholder platform (public and private sectors, research, development partners) to coordinate, develop, and implement strategies and some of the proposed actions, (ii) development of a roadmap to phase the strategic actions, and (iii) identification and engagement of key stakeholders to support the process.

Stakeholders such as the NPA, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Agriculture, Operation Wealth Creation, Kilimo Trust and Grow Africa expressed their commitment to support or work on some actions and initiatives resulting from the dialogue. NPA also committed to play an enhanced role in coordinating various government agencies, convening regular dialogue, and following up to ensure these actions are fully implemented.

The multi-stakeholder platform will ensure implementation and joint efforts are channelled towards identified priorities including:

"The Agricultural Sector has over the years been characterized with lack of quality, consistent and timely data to aid planning and evidence-based policy making. Data is scattered among the allied institutions and often not harmonized. The role of National Food and Agricultural Statistics System (NFASS) is key."

"A neglected area for formation of farmer groups, has been by working through lead firms. For example, exporters off-taking from farmers, to develop farmer groups with which they have an inclusive relationship that increases the loyalty and therefore reliability of the farmers in the group as suppliers to the exporter..."

"The Bureaus of Standards in the region need to harmonize their conformity assessment systems. A certificate issued by the Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UBS) should be acceptable by the Kenya Bureau of Standards (KBS)"

"For our exports of maize, dairy, horticulture...if we don't get the competitiveness, standards, consistency and value addition aspect right, then we will always be secondary players in the global/continental/regional value chains...For this, Public-Private Partnerships are key."

1. Resuscitating the National Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Committee and strengthening platforms for private sector engagement to feed into the Committee. EAMS and TRASE will support private sector mobilization and participation within the Committee working together with the respective partners- EAC, NPA, Ministry of Trade and Ministry of Agriculture.
2. Convening cross-country dialogues between Kenya and Uganda on SPS through the joint contributions of TRASE and EAMS.
3. Ensuring greater collaboration between the Standards Bureaus in the East Africa region to allow for mutual recognition of conformity assessments.
4. Policy LINK and EAMS supporting NPA and UAA to establish continuous dialogue within a multi-stakeholder platform to enable the implementation of the programme approach that has been adopted by the government, moving away from sector-specific governance and implementation, encouraging a holistic approach (pooling of resources, budgets, expertise, strategies) to agriculture issues from production to export marketing. This includes supporting the formulation of a performance management framework or scorecard to monitor the implementation of key actions and strategies.
5. Prioritizing build up actions towards the implementation of the Uganda Commodities Exchange, led by UAA, NPA, and the Ministries of Trade and Finance, including the warehouse receiving systems and other key areas.



Left: Dr Muvawala, Executive Director, NPA, makes his opening remarks. **Right:** Racheal Kemigisha, Director Regional Policy & Regulatory Environment, EAMS presents the study findings.



In-person participants note submissions from virtual attendees

For more information on and resources related to the dialogue, [visit the event page](#)