



COMESA & ACTESA PROGRAMMES

FOR THE POTENTIAL INTEGRATION WITH SDEP

EUSL

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Introduction

During a recent meeting between **ACTESA** (Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa) and the **European Social Label (EUSL)**, discussions arose on how ACTESA's key programs could be integrated into a larger, sustainable development framework. ACTESA, recognizing the comprehensive nature and proven impact of the **Social Development and Empowering Programme (SDEP)**, approached EUSL with a request to explore the feasibility of **merging five critical programs** under the SDEP umbrella.

These programs—**COMBIHAP** (Bioprotectants Harmonisation Programme), **COMBIP** (Biosafety and Biotechnology Implementation Plan), **COMFREP** (Fertilizer Regional Programme), **COMSHIP** (Seed Harmonisation Implementation Plan), and **CEHA** (COMESA-EAC Horticultural Accelerator)—are all designed to address pressing challenges in agriculture and trade within the **COMESA** region. ACTESA saw the potential for greater synergy, scalability, and efficiency by aligning these initiatives with the **infrastructure, governance frameworks, and digital solutions** offered by SDEP.

EUSL was tasked with assessing whether these programs could be effectively merged with SDEP and, if so, to outline how such integration could amplify the goals of **sustainable agriculture, trade facilitation, and inclusive economic growth**. This document presents an analysis and the proposed alignment of ACTESA's programs with SDEP, showcasing how the **complementary strengths** of these initiatives can create a unified approach to solving the region's agricultural and developmental challenges. It also includes arguments for approaching **AfDB**, the UNDP supported project called EFFORT and the coming G20 summit in Brazil.

Summary of Programmes

COMBIHAP

The **COMESA Bioprotectants Harmonisation Programme (COMBIHAP)** is a strategic initiative aimed at harmonizing the regulations for bioprotectants across the 21 COMESA member states. Bioprotectants are natural products that protect crops from pests, weeds, and diseases, and offer a safer alternative to chemical pesticides, which pose health risks and environmental hazards. The program was developed in response to the challenges posed by aflatoxin contamination, a serious issue that affects grain trade, food safety, and public health in the region.

Aflatoxin, produced by the fungus *Aspergillus flavus*, contaminates staple crops like maize and groundnuts, leading to significant rejections of trade consignments, especially between Kenya and Uganda, as well as for exports to the EU and US. This contamination has caused major disruptions in agricultural trade, with economic losses affecting smallholder farmers, who make up the majority of producers in the region. Prolonged exposure to aflatoxin is linked to severe health risks, including liver cancer, making food safety a top priority.

Despite the existence of bioprotectants like Aflasafe™, which can mitigate aflatoxin contamination, regulatory barriers have limited their widespread adoption. Many COMESA member states still treat bioprotectants as conventional pesticides, without specific regulations to facilitate their registration and commercialization. To address this, COMBIHAP seeks to create a harmonized regulatory framework that accelerates the approval and use of bioprotectants, allowing smallholder farmers to access these safer and more sustainable pest control tools.

The program's overall goal is to develop and implement a unified system for bioprotectant registration, which will include mutual recognition of efficacy requirements, the creation of new standards, and technology transfer mechanisms. Through a series of regional workshops, technical consultations, and engagement with private sector stakeholders, COMBIHAP aims to streamline regulations and reduce trade barriers for bioprotectants. This will not only improve food safety but also enhance the competitiveness of smallholder farmers by enabling them to produce uncontaminated crops suitable for both regional and international markets.

By harmonizing bioprotectant regulations, COMBIHAP aims to contribute significantly to the development of a safer, more sustainable agricultural sector in the COMESA region, ultimately boosting intra-regional trade and improving the livelihoods of millions of smallholders farmers.

COMBIP

The **COMESA Biosafety and Biotechnology Implementation Plan (COMBIP)** is a crucial initiative aimed at advancing the safe and effective use of biotechnology across the COMESA region. The plan's central focus is to implement the COMESA Regional Biotechnology and Biosafety Policy, which was developed and endorsed after nearly a decade of consultations and approved by the COMESA Council of Ministers in 2015. The **initial activities** of COMBIP, outlined in May 2024, mark the first steps in translating this policy into action.

COMESA is the only regional economic community in Africa with a fully developed biosafety and biotechnology policy. Biotechnology, particularly the use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), holds great potential for addressing key agricultural challenges in the region, such as pest infestations, diseases, and climate stresses like drought. However, regulating GMOs and ensuring their safe use requires a robust biosafety framework, especially to avoid the complexities that can arise from GMO regulation acting as a non-tariff trade barrier.

COMBIP's **primary goal** is to establish a **Regional Biosafety Risk Assessment Mechanism** that can serve all member states. This mechanism will help streamline the regulatory process for biotechnology products, reducing the time and cost for countries to assess GMOs. It also helps resource-challenged countries that lack the capacity to conduct their own biosafety assessments. Through the creation of the **COMESA Panel of Experts (PoE)** on Biotechnology and Biosafety, COMBIP will standardize operating procedures, provide technical guidance, and share resources among member states.

Another key focus is building **biosafety regulatory capacity** in COMESA member states by periodically assessing the status of their national frameworks and providing support for their upgrade. This includes training national regulatory bodies, developing a regional database of risk assessors, and establishing subcommittees on GMO risk assessments. The aim is to enable member states to adopt biotechnology products that are safe, effective, and tailored to local needs.

Additionally, **public awareness and communication** are central to COMBIP. The program aims to demystify biotechnology and biosafety, addressing the concerns and misconceptions that often surround GMOs. Through stakeholder engagement and targeted media campaigns, the program seeks to facilitate informed public discourse rather than debates, allowing national policies to be shaped by data and evidence.

The **benefits of COMBIP** are numerous, including reduced costs for member states by sharing regulatory expertise, faster decision-making on biotech products, and increased trade opportunities. By harmonizing biosafety frameworks, COMBIP helps minimize trade disruptions and fosters regional cooperation, which is especially important given the threats posed by pests like the fall armyworm and diseases like cassava brown streak.

The initial activities also include facilitating the **Confined Field Trials (CFT)** and environmental release of GM crops in countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Malawi, and Zambia. By establishing common protocols and a shared database of biosafety information, COMBIP paves the way for these countries to test and eventually commercialize GMO crops that can withstand harsh environmental conditions.

Ultimately, COMBIP is an essential step towards integrating biotechnology into the agricultural systems of COMESA member states. It empowers farmers with access to modern agricultural technologies, improves food security, and promotes intra-regional trade by overcoming regulatory barriers.

COMFREP

The **COMESA Fertilizer Regional Programme (COMFREP)**, as proposed in June 2024, is a comprehensive initiative aimed at addressing the severe challenges surrounding fertilizer use and availability in the COMESA region. Fertilizer is crucial for increasing agricultural productivity, but in this region, farmers use only an average of 18 kg of fertilizer per hectare, which pales in comparison to the 209 kg per hectare used in Asia. This underutilization has resulted in persistently low crop yields and severe soil nutrient depletion, which continues to threaten food security and economic growth.

The **core aim of COMFREP** is to increase the use of both organic and inorganic fertilizers across the 21 COMESA member states by harmonizing fertilizer regulations, improving distribution networks, and addressing systemic barriers such as high transport costs and lack of access to finance. The program recognizes that access to affordable, high-quality fertilizer is key to improving yields for smallholder farmers, who make up a significant portion of the agricultural sector in the region. By improving the regulatory framework and facilitating cross-border trade, COMFREP seeks to make fertilizers more accessible, timely, and affordable for these farmers.

One of the primary challenges identified by COMFREP is the **regulatory environment**, which often complicates fertilizer trade. Fertilizer regulations in many COMESA countries are outdated, and regulatory approval processes for new fertilizers can take years, creating unnecessary delays. These barriers discourage private sector investment and restrict access to more effective fertilizer blends that could significantly boost productivity. COMFREP aims to address this by harmonizing fertilizer regulations across the region, reducing non-tariff barriers, and streamlining approval processes for new fertilizer products. This will create a more predictable and transparent market environment, encouraging private sector participation and improving cross-border trade.

Another major objective of the program is to establish a **regional bulk procurement system**. By pooling resources and coordinating procurement across COMESA member states, the program aims to lower costs through economies of scale. This will make fertilizers more affordable for smallholder farmers, many of whom currently cannot afford the quantities needed to significantly improve their yields. In addition, the program will focus on expanding the network of agrodealers, particularly in rural areas, to ensure that fertilizers are available where they are most needed.

COMFREP also emphasizes the importance of **sustainability**. The program will promote the use of organic fertilizers and sustainable soil management practices to prevent further soil degradation. This includes conducting soil analyses and creating regional soil fertility maps, which will help fertilizer producers develop blends that are specifically tailored to the nutrient needs of different areas. The program also explores the potential for using renewable energy sources, such as green ammonia, in fertilizer production, which aligns with broader goals of environmental sustainability.

Furthermore, COMFREP recognizes the need to **support farmers with knowledge and training**. The program will organize field demonstrations, farmer field schools, and capacity-building initiatives to teach farmers about best practices in fertilizer use, integrated soil fertility management, and crop nutrition. By providing farmers with the necessary knowledge and tools, COMFREP aims to ensure that fertilizers are used efficiently and effectively, maximizing their impact on yields and farm incomes.

The **social and economic impact** of COMFREP is expected to be substantial. By improving fertilizer availability and use, the program will help boost agricultural productivity, increase food security, and reduce rural poverty. Smallholder farmers will benefit from higher crop yields, improved soil health, and access to new market opportunities. The program will also create jobs in the fertilizer supply chain, from production and distribution to retail.



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In conclusion, the COMESA Fertilizer Regional Programme (COMFREP) is designed to address one of the most pressing issues facing the agricultural sector in the COMESA region. By harmonizing regulations, improving access to fertilizers, and promoting sustainable practices, COMFREP aims to transform agricultural productivity and empower smallholder farmers, helping to build resilient food systems and drive economic growth across the region.

COMSHIP

The **COMESA Seed Harmonisation Implementation Plan (COMSHIP)**, outlined in October 2021, is a strategic initiative designed to address the critical issue of seed insecurity and to enhance agricultural productivity across the COMESA region. Seed security—ensuring that farmers have access to high-quality, locally adapted seeds—is essential for food security and rural livelihoods. However, seed availability and access in the region remain low, with less than 25% of smallholder farmers having reliable access to quality seed. This shortage of improved seeds contributes to low crop yields and widespread food insecurity, affecting millions of farmers.

COMSHIP was developed in response to these challenges, aiming to harmonize seed trade regulations across COMESA's 19 member states. The plan seeks to create a regulatory environment that supports the production, distribution, and trade of high-quality seeds, making it easier for farmers to access improved seed varieties. It also focuses on enhancing the competitiveness of the seed industry by facilitating cross-border trade and investment in seed production, while also ensuring that these seeds meet quality and phytosanitary standards.

The **key goal of COMSHIP** is to streamline the regulations governing seed certification, variety release, and quarantine measures across the region. This harmonization will reduce trade barriers, allowing for the free flow of seeds between countries, which is crucial for improving smallholder farmers' access to better seed varieties. COMSHIP focuses on removing discrepancies in seed laws between member states, which have historically hindered local seed companies' growth and regional trade. By creating a unified framework, the program helps seed companies and farmers access a wider variety of seed options that are tested and approved under consistent regulations.

One of COMSHIP's primary objectives is to **increase smallholder farmers' access to high-quality seeds**, which are essential for improving crop yields and food security. The plan emphasizes the role of private sector seed companies in producing and distributing these seeds, while also encouraging local seed production to reduce dependency on imports. By facilitating faster seed variety release processes, COMSHIP ensures that farmers have timely access to the latest, most productive seed varieties.

COMSHIP also emphasizes **capacity building** at multiple levels, from regulatory authorities to smallholder farmers. It includes training programs for national seed certification agencies to ensure they can implement the harmonized regulations effectively. For farmers, it includes educational initiatives to improve their knowledge of the benefits of improved seeds and modern farming practices. This focus on capacity building ensures that both the regulatory and practical aspects of seed systems are strengthened, leading to better adoption of high-quality seeds and higher productivity on farms.

A significant aspect of COMSHIP is its focus on **inclusive development**, ensuring that smallholder farmers, particularly women and youth, are actively involved in seed production and trade. The program aims for at least 30% participation from women, reflecting its commitment to gender equality in the agricultural sector. Smallholder farmers are also given priority in training and support programs, enabling them to take part in the seed value chain and contribute to regional food security.



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Moreover, COMSHIP incorporates **climate-smart agriculture** principles by promoting seed varieties that are resilient to climate change, such as drought-tolerant and pest-resistant crops. This is particularly important in the COMESA region, where climate variability poses a serious threat to agricultural productivity. By providing access to seeds that are better adapted to changing environmental conditions, COMSHIP helps farmers mitigate the risks of crop failures and food shortages.

The program also envisions a strong **monitoring and improvement mechanism**, ensuring that the implementation of harmonized seed regulations is regularly reviewed and updated to reflect new developments and challenges. This will help maintain the competitiveness of the seed industry and ensure that farmers continue to benefit from the latest advancements in seed technology.

The overall **impact of COMSHIP** is expected to be substantial. By improving the regulatory environment for seed trade, the program will facilitate greater investment in the seed industry, boost agricultural productivity, and increase food security across the region. Farmers will benefit from a wider variety of high-quality seeds, improved yields, and higher incomes. The program is also expected to stimulate intra-regional trade in seeds, contributing to economic growth and regional integration within COMESA.

In conclusion, **COMSHIP** is a transformative initiative that addresses the foundational issue of seed security in the COMESA region. By harmonizing regulations, enhancing capacity, and promoting inclusivity, the program aims to create a thriving seed sector that supports sustainable agricultural growth, increases food security, and improves the livelihoods of millions of smallholder farmers.

CEHA

The **COMESA-EAC Horticultural Accelerator (CEHA)**, as outlined in the 2023 concept note, is a strategic initiative aimed at boosting the productivity, competitiveness, and trade of horticultural products across the COMESA and East African Community (EAC) regions. The horticulture sector has significant untapped potential to contribute to rural economic growth, job creation, and improved nutrition, particularly for small-scale producers. Horticulture is especially important for empowering women, who represent over 50% of the workforce in this sector, and for driving inclusive economic development.

The **vision of CEHA** is that by 2031, climate-smart horticulture value chains will become a key driver of income growth, job creation, and improved nutrition in Eastern and Southern Africa. The program focuses on three **priority value chains**—avocado, onion, and Irish potato—chosen for their high potential in terms of production, market demand, and ability to impact the livelihoods of smallholder farmers. These crops were selected based on production capacity, market competitiveness, and alignment with government priorities, ensuring that the program is tailored to address the most pressing challenges and opportunities in the region.

CEHA's approach is based on **value chain development** and seeks to enhance productivity by addressing the agronomic, logistical, and regulatory challenges that affect horticultural production. The program aims to create well-organized, climate-smart horticulture value chains that connect smallholder farmers with national and regional markets. This will involve upgrading infrastructure, improving access to financing, and promoting modern agricultural practices that increase yields and reduce environmental impacts. By focusing on these critical areas, CEHA intends to generate an additional \$230 million in annual value for approximately 450,000 smallholder farmers across the targeted countries.



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One of the core strategies of CEHA is to **create strategic production and processing clusters** in five focus countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda. These clusters will serve as hubs for production, aggregation, processing, and export, leveraging each region's comparative advantage in producing specific horticultural commodities. For example, Kenya's avocado and Irish potato sectors have the potential to create over 430,000 jobs, while Tanzania and Uganda can generate substantial employment through onion production. These clusters will also support the development of infrastructure such as irrigation, roads, and power, facilitating better logistics and storage solutions, which are critical for maintaining product quality and reducing post-harvest losses.

CEHA also aims to strengthen the **supply chains** within these clusters by using a combination of digital tools, capacity building, and partnerships with farmer organizations. Through digital platforms, CEHA will enhance the coordination of inputs, logistics, and financing, ensuring that smallholder farmers can access the resources they need to grow and sell their produce more efficiently. The program will also support the creation of **agribusiness incubators** to provide technical assistance and venture capital to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within the value chain, helping them scale up and reach commercial viability.

In terms of **financing**, CEHA recognizes that access to affordable capital is one of the biggest constraints faced by smallholder farmers and agribusinesses. High interest rates, stringent collateral requirements, and lengthy processing times often prevent farmers from obtaining the financing they need to invest in their farms. To address this, CEHA will work with financial institutions to develop **tailored financial products** that are better suited to the needs of farmers and SMEs. This will include innovative risk-sharing mechanisms and partnerships with input suppliers and processors to provide credit and technical support under contract farming arrangements.

CEHA is also heavily focused on **trade facilitation and market access**. The program will work to improve policy and regulatory frameworks that support intra-regional trade in horticultural products. This includes aligning standards and certifications across the COMESA and EAC regions to facilitate smoother cross-border trade, reducing bureaucratic barriers, and enabling farmers to tap into growing export markets. CEHA will also leverage public and private investments to improve trade infrastructure, including cold storage facilities and transport networks, to ensure that horticultural products can be delivered to markets in a timely and efficient manner.

The **climate-smart** aspect of CEHA is crucial, as the program promotes sustainable agricultural practices that help farmers adapt to changing climate conditions. This includes the adoption of resilient crop varieties, improved water management techniques, and the use of environmentally friendly inputs. CEHA's focus on sustainability aligns with broader efforts to ensure that the region's agricultural development is environmentally sound and economically viable in the long term.

CEHA's governance structure is designed to ensure **broad stakeholder engagement**. It operates through national platforms that include representatives from the private sector, government, research institutions, and farmer organizations. These platforms will drive the program's strategic priorities, ensuring that private sector voices are at the center of decision-making. At the regional level, CEHA is overseen by a board and technical committees that provide guidance on trade, infrastructure, standards, and climate-smart practices. This multi-stakeholder approach ensures that the program remains responsive to the needs of both farmers and markets, while also fostering collaboration among key actors in the horticulture sector.

In summary, **CEHA** is a transformative initiative that seeks to modernize and expand the horticulture sector in the COMESA and EAC regions. By improving value chains, enhancing market access, and



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promoting climate-smart practices, the program aims to generate significant economic and social benefits for smallholder farmers, particularly women. It offers a pathway to increased incomes, job creation, and improved food security, while also positioning the region as a competitive player in the global horticultural market.

Summary of programmes

The five programs —COMBIHAP, COMBIP, COMFREP, COMSHIP, and CEHA—are all strategic initiatives under COMESA, designed to enhance agricultural productivity, facilitate trade, and improve food security across the region. They share a common goal of empowering smallholder farmers, promoting inclusive economic growth, and ensuring sustainability. Here's how these programs align and complement each other:

1. Improving Agricultural Productivity through Access to Inputs

All five programs focus on improving access to essential agricultural inputs, such as seeds, fertilizers, and bioprotectants:

- **COMSHIP** aims to harmonize seed trade regulations, making it easier for farmers to access high-quality, improved seed varieties across borders, which directly boosts crop yields.
- **COMFREP** tackles the challenge of low fertilizer usage by harmonizing fertilizer regulations and promoting the availability of both organic and inorganic fertilizers, ensuring that farmers have access to the nutrients their crops need.
- **COMBIHAP** focuses on bioprotectants, which are natural alternatives to chemical pesticides. This program helps reduce contamination (e.g., aflatoxin) and ensures that farmers can protect their crops sustainably.

These three initiatives together ensure that farmers have access to the full range of critical inputs—seeds, fertilizers, and crop protection solutions—needed to maximize productivity and profitability.

2. Harmonization of Regulations and Trade Facilitation

Harmonizing regulations across the region is a key theme in all programs, helping to create a more integrated and efficient market for agricultural inputs and products:

- **COMSHIP** works to harmonize seed certification, variety release systems, and phytosanitary measures across COMESA member states, enabling freer trade of seeds and improving farmers' access to diverse crop varieties.
- **COMFREP** does the same for fertilizers by standardizing fertilizer regulations and reducing trade barriers like tariffs, making fertilizers more accessible and affordable.
- **COMBIHAP** aligns regulations for bioprotectants, allowing for mutual recognition of safety and efficacy standards, which facilitates the cross-border movement of bioprotectants.

This alignment of regulations across sectors enables farmers to benefit from a more competitive and open market, reducing the costs of essential agricultural inputs and improving trade efficiency.

3. Capacity Building and Knowledge Sharing

Capacity building is a core component of all five programs, ensuring that both farmers and regulatory bodies are well-equipped to implement new technologies and regulations:

- **COMBIP** focuses on building national capacity to regulate and assess biotechnology and biosafety, allowing member states to make informed decisions about the adoption of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and other biotech products.
- **COMSHIP** includes extensive training for farmers and national certification agencies to help them adopt new seed varieties and improve seed systems.



- **CEHA** emphasizes capacity building for smallholder farmers and agribusinesses within the horticulture sector, supporting them with technical assistance and business training.

All programs invest in knowledge transfer and skill development, ensuring that stakeholders at all levels—from small-scale farmers to national regulators—can effectively participate in and benefit from the agricultural value chains.

4. Climate-Smart and Sustainable Agricultural Practices

Sustainability is a shared focus, particularly in relation to climate change resilience and environmental protection:

- **COMBIHAP** promotes the use of bioprotectants, which are environmentally friendly alternatives to chemical pesticides, reducing the harmful effects of traditional pest control methods on human health and ecosystems.
- **COMFREP** encourages the use of both organic fertilizers and sustainable soil management practices to prevent soil degradation and promote long-term agricultural sustainability.
- **CEHA** focuses on climate-smart horticulture value chains, promoting resilient crop varieties and sustainable farming techniques to adapt to changing environmental conditions.

By prioritizing climate-smart practices, these programs collectively help farmers mitigate the impacts of climate change and ensure the long-term sustainability of agriculture in the COMESA region.

5. Economic Empowerment and Inclusive Development

These initiatives aim to empower vulnerable populations, particularly smallholder farmers, women, and youth, by increasing their access to markets and resources:

- **CEHA** specifically targets the empowerment of women, who make up over 50% of the horticultural workforce, and supports smallholder farmers by linking them to larger markets.
- **COMSHIP** promotes inclusive development by ensuring that at least 30% of participants in its seed programs are women.
- **COMBIP** and **COMFREP** provide pathways for smallholder farmers to adopt advanced technologies and inputs like GMOs and fertilizers, boosting their productivity and market access.

These programs are designed to drive inclusive economic growth by ensuring that marginalized groups, particularly women and smallholder farmers, are fully integrated into regional agricultural systems.

6. Trade and Market Access

Improving market access is central to these programs, particularly for smallholder farmers:

- **CEHA** facilitates access to regional and international markets for horticultural products by improving infrastructure, standards, and supply chains.
- **COMSHIP** and **COMFREP** improve trade in seeds and fertilizers by reducing regulatory barriers, ensuring that farmers can access and trade high-quality agricultural inputs across borders.
- **COMBIP** focuses on enabling regional cooperation in biosafety regulations, facilitating the adoption and trade of biotech crops that can boost food security and incomes.



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By enhancing intra-regional trade, these programs help farmers tap into larger markets, increasing their incomes and contributing to regional food security.

Summary

The alignment of these five programs—**COMBIHAP**, **COMBIP**, **COMFREP**, **COMSHIP**, and **CEHA**—demonstrates COMESA's holistic approach to tackling agricultural challenges. Together, they ensure that farmers have access to the inputs, knowledge, and markets they need to improve productivity, trade, and resilience. By harmonizing regulations, promoting sustainable practices, and focusing on inclusive growth, these initiatives work in concert to empower smallholder farmers, boost food security, and foster economic development across the COMESA region.

HOW EACH PROGRAMME FITS WITH SDEP

1. **COMSHIP (COMESA Seed Harmonisation Implementation Plan):** This program directly contributes to social development by enhancing access to high-quality seeds for smallholder farmers, thereby improving agricultural productivity, food security, and rural livelihoods. COMSHIP focuses on gender inclusion and youth participation, aligning with the Social Development and Empowering Programme's aim to uplift disadvantaged groups. The plan encourages the participation of at least 30% women and youth in the seed sector through capacity-building initiatives like farmer field schools, out-grower schemes, and educational programs. The program also promotes rural development by supporting small seed producers and building infrastructure for trade, ultimately empowering communities with better economic opportunities.
2. **COMFREP (COMESA Fertilizer Regional Programme):** COMFREP enhances social empowerment by improving access to fertilizers, leading to higher agricultural yields, which is critical for food security and economic growth in rural areas. By reducing trade barriers and making fertilizers more affordable, the program empowers smallholder farmers to increase their productivity. It also supports sustainable practices and environmental health, which directly benefit community livelihoods, aligning with the social development goals.
3. **COMBIHAP (COMESA Bioprotectants Harmonisation Programme):** The bioprotectants program focuses on natural solutions for pest management, reducing the need for harmful chemicals. This is socially empowering as it promotes healthier farming practices and improves food safety, especially for small-scale farmers who often cannot afford expensive chemical pesticides. COMBIHAP's focus on harmonizing regulations across the region also facilitates intra-regional trade, which boosts local economies and provides farmers with better market access.
4. **COMBIP (COMESA Biosafety and Biotechnology Implementation Plan):** This program empowers farmers by introducing safe and regulated biotechnology solutions, such as genetically modified crops that are resistant to pests and drought. COMBIP supports social development by ensuring that farmers, especially in rural areas, have access to modern agricultural technologies. The program also raises awareness and builds capacity around biotechnology, ensuring that smallholder farmers can fully benefit from these innovations, which aligns with empowerment goals.
5. **CEHA (COMESA-EAC Horticultural Accelerator):** CEHA promotes economic empowerment through horticulture by creating jobs, increasing incomes, and improving nutrition. The program specifically targets smallholder farmers and women, who are significantly involved in the horticultural value chain. By focusing on priority crops like avocado, onion, and Irish potato, CEHA helps farmers optimize their output and access new markets, fostering inclusive economic growth. It also supports climate-smart practices, infrastructure development, and access to finance, all of which are critical for sustained empowerment.

All of these programs fit into the broader Social Development and Empowering Programme by promoting economic inclusion, gender equality, capacity building, and environmental sustainability. They empower rural communities by improving access to critical agricultural inputs, facilitating trade, and enhancing food security.

INTEGRATING PROGRAMMES WITH SDEP

1. COMBIHAP (Bioprotectants Harmonisation Programme)

Integration with SDEP:

- **Technology Transfer and Training:** Through SDEP's focus on transferring advanced technologies, particularly in agriculture, COMBIHAP can benefit by leveraging SDEP's vocational training to educate farmers and agricultural agencies on the use of bioprotectants. The ECHO platform, with its renewable energy and water recycling capabilities, can support bioprotectant facilities and research centers.
- **SDEP Support:** The program's harmonization of bioprotectant regulations across COMESA can be accelerated by integrating **ECHO's** technology for agricultural infrastructure, helping rural areas improve crop production safely and sustainably. SDEP's platform can ensure effective dissemination and adoption of bioprotectants, thus strengthening COMBIHAP's reach.

What COMBIHAP Gains:

- **Infrastructure and technology** for deploying bioprotectant systems at scale.
- **Skill development** for smallholder farmers on bioprotectant use and climate-smart practices, fostering safer agricultural practices.

2. COMBIP (Biosafety and Biotechnology Implementation Plan)

Integration with SDEP:

- **Skill Development:** SDEP can offer training programs through its vocational education channels, helping local regulators and farmers understand the application of biotechnology products such as GMOs. This fits with SDEP's existing focus on agricultural education and aligns with its goal of improving food security and crop resilience.
- **SDEP Support:** The ECHO platform's energy and water management capabilities can be used to support biotech labs and controlled environment agriculture, fostering innovation in biosafety and biotechnology. This could also facilitate **GMOs' confined field trials**, which are a focus of COMBIP.

What COMBIP Gains:

- **Technology and infrastructure** for biosafety facilities.
- **Training and awareness** programs to demystify biotechnology for the public and regulators, promoting wider acceptance and use of GMOs.

3. COMFREP (Fertilizer Regional Programme)

Integration with SDEP:

- **Circular Economy:** SDEP's focus on circular communities and sustainable resource use aligns with COMFREP's goals of promoting organic and inorganic fertilizers. **ECHO's** water recycling and sewage treatment technologies can support the production of organic fertilizers, turning waste into valuable agricultural inputs.
- **SDEP Support:** SDEP's modular infrastructure, particularly the ECHO platform, can support **fertilizer distribution hubs** in remote areas, helping farmers access fertilizers more easily.



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Vocational training can educate farmers on optimal fertilizer use and integrated soil fertility management.

What COMFREP Gains:

- **Improved logistics** and infrastructure for fertilizer distribution via ECHO's modular platforms.
- **Farmer education programs** on sustainable fertilizer use, increasing productivity and environmental benefits.

4. COMSHIP (Seed Harmonisation Implementation Plan)

Integration with SDEP:

- **Vocational Training and Digital Platforms:** SDEP can enhance COMSHIP by providing **digital tools** and training for farmers and seed certification agencies, aligning with SDEP's aim to boost agricultural productivity through technology. ECHO's infrastructure could also help in establishing seed hubs and storage facilities that ensure better seed preservation and availability.
- **SDEP Support:** With its emphasis on cross-border collaboration, SDEP can assist in facilitating the harmonized seed trade regulations that COMSHIP focuses on. This would involve using SDEP's partnerships with international universities and tech providers to establish seed certification labs and testing centers in COMESA countries.

What COMSHIP Gains:

- **Technological support** for seed certification labs and storage systems.
- **Educational programs** for farmers on the benefits of high-quality seeds, enhancing adoption rates and improving yields.

5. CEHA (COMESA-EAC Horticultural Accelerator)

Integration with SDEP:

- **Infrastructure Development:** CEHA can greatly benefit from the infrastructure offered by SDEP's ECHO platform. Modular systems for water and energy can support **horticultural production clusters** in rural areas, providing sustainable solutions for irrigation, storage, and logistics.
- **SDEP Support:** SDEP's focus on circular communities can help CEHA develop **climate-smart horticulture practices**, ensuring that farmers have access to sustainable energy, water, and infrastructure. Training programs could also support the development of **horticultural processing SMEs**, allowing more women and youth to participate in value chains.

What CEHA Gains:

- **Access to sustainable infrastructure** like solar-powered cold storage and water management systems for horticulture.
- **Farmer training** in climate-smart practices and agribusiness development, increasing productivity and market access.



How SDEP Supports the Existing Programmes:

- **Vocational Training and Capacity Building:** Each program can benefit from SDEP's **education and training modules** that equip farmers, businesses, and regulators with the necessary skills to implement advanced agricultural technologies.
- **Sustainable Infrastructure:** The **ECHO platform** provides scalable and sustainable infrastructure that supports agriculture, energy, and water needs—vital for programs like CEHA, COMFREP, and COMBIHAP, which require advanced systems for irrigation, processing, and food safety.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Through **GSIA (Global Social Impact Alliance)**, SDEP facilitates **public-private partnerships** that help secure long-term investment and sustainability for these programs. This is particularly useful for COMSHIP and COMFREP, which need strong cross-border and private-sector collaborations to thrive.

What ACTESA and COMESA Get in Return:

1. **Technological Integration:** SDEP's advanced **ECHO platform** helps enhance agricultural infrastructure, enabling programs like COMBIHAP, CEHA, and COMSHIP to scale more efficiently.
2. **Expanded Reach and Sustainability:** By integrating with SDEP, ACTESA and COMESA may gain access to international networks, potential access to **funding from development finance institutions**, and sustainable development technologies that ensure long-term impact in agriculture, food security, and rural development.
3. **Job Creation and Economic Growth:** The combination of vocational training and infrastructure development drives **job creation**, especially in the agribusiness sector, while fostering **entrepreneurship**—key goals for both ACTESA and COMESA.
4. **Collaboration with International Universities:** The participation of top global universities ensures the programs are backed by **world-class research** and technological innovation, enhancing ACTESA's and COMESA's credibility and impact across the region.
5. **Creating Sustainable Economic Models through GSIA and PPPs:** SDEP's **Global Social Impact Alliance (GSIA)** will play a pivotal role in scaling the ACTESA and COMESA programs by facilitating **public-private partnerships (PPPs)**. These partnerships will help secure long-term funding and investment in agriculture, enabling the development of seed hubs (COMSHIP), fertilizer distribution centers (COMFREP), and processing facilities (CEHA). Through GSIA's **PPP as a Service (PPPaaS)** model, COMESA programs can attract private sector investment and international development funding, ensuring that essential agricultural technologies and resources are available to the most vulnerable farmers in the region. The **Effort Project's** expertise in creating innovative public-private collaborations for urban development will further support the scaling of agricultural infrastructure and trade across COMESA member states.
6. **Long-term Sustainability and Global Partnerships:** By integrating ACTESA and COMESA programs into SDEP, we ensure that these initiatives are supported by cutting-edge technology, sustainable infrastructure, and a comprehensive training system. The **Effort Project** and **UNDP** provide additional governance, sustainability, and innovation expertise, helping these programs align with global standards such as the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.



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UNDP's involvement ensures that each program adheres to principles of **inclusive development** and addresses the needs of marginalized communities, particularly in rural areas where food security and economic growth are critical. UNDP's focus on gender equality will also ensure that women play a key role in the agricultural value chains, particularly in horticulture (CEHA) and seed trade (COMSHIP).

The Effort Project's experience with urban sustainability and circular economy principles will support the development of climate-smart agriculture, helping these programs adapt to changing environmental conditions while reducing waste and improving resource efficiency.

Integrating ACTESA and COMESA programs into SDEP creates synergistic partnership that enhances food security, agricultural productivity, and regional trade in the COMESA region. Through the support of SDEP's **ECHO platform, vocational training programs, and public-private partnerships**, these programs will gain access to the technology, infrastructure, and funding they need to scale effectively.

In return, ACTESA and COMESA bring regional expertise and networks that enable SDEP to expand its impact across multiple sectors, from **biotechnology and seed certification to horticulture and fertilizer distribution**. Together, these partnerships will drive sustainable economic growth, create jobs, and improve livelihoods across the COMESA region, while setting a global example for inclusive and climate-resilient development.



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ROLE OF AfDB

The Role of AfDB in the Social Development and Empowering Programme (SDEP): Strategic Alignment and Value Proposition

Introduction

The **Social Development and Empowering Programme (SDEP)** represents an opportunity to address the critical socio-economic challenges faced by the **COMESA** region. This program is designed to foster sustainable development, food security, and inclusive economic growth by integrating advanced infrastructure, vocational training, and public-private partnerships. With the integration of ACTESA and COMESA's agricultural programs, such as **COMSHIP**, **COMFREP**, **COMBIHAP**, **COMBIP**, and **CEHA**, SDEP has the potential to transform the agricultural landscape of the region.

However, to scale and achieve the desired impact, the involvement of the **African Development Bank (AfDB)** is crucial. This chapter provides compelling arguments for why AfDB's role in SDEP is vital, outlining the clear **value proposition** for AfDB and how the program aligns with its **strategic priorities**.

The Role of AfDB in SDEP

1. Supporting AfDB's Strategic Priorities (High 5s) AfDB's **High 5** strategic priorities are at the core of its development agenda for Africa. SDEP is perfectly aligned with these priorities, offering AfDB a direct channel to fulfill its mission in the following areas:

- **Feed Africa:** By increasing access to high-quality seeds, fertilizers, bioprotectants, and biotechnology, SDEP aims to boost agricultural productivity across the COMESA region. This is in direct alignment with AfDB's **Feed Africa** initiative, which seeks to reduce food insecurity and transform African agriculture into a wealth-generating sector. SDEP's collaboration with programs like **COMSHIP** (seeds) and **COMFREP** (fertilizers) will directly contribute to the goal of increasing agricultural yields and improving food security.
- **Light Up and Power Africa:** Through the deployment of the **ECHO platform**, SDEP provides renewable energy solutions for rural and agricultural areas, supporting AfDB's vision of increasing energy access across Africa. **ECHO** enables off-grid, sustainable energy for agricultural hubs, ensuring that key infrastructure (irrigation, storage, processing) is powered efficiently. This directly supports AfDB's goal of expanding energy access to underserved regions.
- **Integrate Africa:** SDEP's focus on **cross-border trade facilitation** through harmonized regulations for seeds, fertilizers, and biotechnologies aligns with AfDB's **Integrate Africa** agenda. By supporting regional collaboration and the free flow of agricultural inputs and products, SDEP strengthens intra-regional trade and economic integration, particularly through programs like **COMSHIP** (seed trade harmonization) and **COMBIP** (biotechnology regulation).
- **Industrialize Africa:** SDEP's efforts to enhance agricultural value chains, particularly through **vocational training** and the development of agribusiness hubs, contributes to **industrialization**. Programs like **CEHA** (horticulture clusters) focus on processing, storage, and logistics infrastructure, driving the growth of agro-industries. AfDB's involvement would enable the industrialization of agriculture by promoting value addition and job creation.
- **Improve the Quality of Life for the People of Africa:** By empowering smallholder farmers, women, and youth through skills development and access to resources, SDEP enhances livelihoods and creates sustainable economic opportunities. AfDB's participation in SDEP would



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directly support this goal by facilitating the creation of thousands of jobs in agriculture and related sectors.

2. Return on Investment (ROI) for AfDB: AfDB stands to gain significant returns from its involvement in SDEP, both in terms of economic impact and strategic influence:

- **Economic Impact:** SDEP's integration with ACTESA and COMESA's agricultural programs will lead to increased productivity, enhanced trade, and improved food security across the region. By investing in SDEP, AfDB can expect substantial economic returns, as smallholder farmers become more productive, regional trade flourishes, and agribusinesses expand. This will create a ripple effect, boosting GDP growth, increasing regional trade, and improving fiscal stability in COMESA member states.
- **Scalability and Replicability:** SDEP is designed to be **scalable and replicable** across Africa. While the program initially focuses on the COMESA region, it can be expanded to other regions with similar agricultural and infrastructure needs. AfDB's involvement would not only catalyze success in COMESA but also provide a blueprint for agricultural transformation across the continent.
- **Strengthened Strategic Partnerships:** AfDB's involvement in SDEP would further strengthen its **partnerships with international development organizations** such as **UNDP** and global universities (Uppsala, Linköping). These partnerships provide AfDB with access to cutting-edge research, global best practices, and innovative technologies that will enhance the effectiveness of its investments.

3. AfDB's Role in the Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Model: SDEP's **Global Social Impact Alliance (GSIA)** facilitates public-private partnerships through its **PPP as a Service (PPPaaS)** model, which creates investment opportunities in infrastructure, technology, and agriculture. AfDB's role in this PPP model would be twofold:

- **Financial Participation:** AfDB can participate as a financial partner, leveraging its resources to attract private investment and co-financing. Through GSIA's PPPaaS framework, AfDB can support the financing of **agricultural hubs, seed certification labs, fertilizer distribution centers**, and other infrastructure projects that will scale SDEP's impact.
- **Strategic Leadership:** AfDB's leadership in the PPP model would ensure that investments are aligned with regional development goals and that private sector engagement is focused on long-term sustainability. AfDB's participation will also facilitate the **de-risking of investments**, making agriculture and infrastructure projects more attractive to private investors.

4. Mitigating Risks and Enhancing Sustainability: One of AfDB's key concerns in large-scale development projects is risk management and ensuring long-term sustainability. SDEP has built-in mechanisms to address these concerns:

- **Risk Management:** By leveraging **UNDP's expertise in governance** and **Effort Project's experience in public-private partnerships**, SDEP has established strong frameworks for managing political, regulatory, and operational risks. AfDB's involvement would further



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enhance this risk mitigation strategy, ensuring that the program remains resilient in the face of challenges such as regulatory changes or logistical barriers.

- **Sustainability and Impact:** SDEP's focus on the **circular economy**, particularly through the **ECHO platform**, ensures that infrastructure development is environmentally sustainable and resource-efficient. This aligns with AfDB's commitment to promoting **green growth** and **climate resilience**. By supporting sustainable agriculture, renewable energy, and waste management, SDEP reduces environmental impacts while fostering long-term economic growth.

5. Demonstrating Leadership in African Development: AfDB has long been at the forefront of promoting sustainable and inclusive development across Africa. Its participation in the Social Development and Empowering Programme (SDEP) offers the bank a unique opportunity to demonstrate leadership in addressing some of the continent's most pressing challenges, particularly around food security, agricultural transformation, and sustainable infrastructure development.

By supporting SDEP, AfDB can:

- **Showcase Innovation in Agricultural Development:** SDEP integrates cutting-edge technologies, such as the ECHO platform for renewable energy and water management, into agricultural value chains. AfDB's involvement in supporting these innovations will position the bank as a leader in driving technological advancements that improve both food security and environmental sustainability across Africa.
- **Lead Cross-Border Collaboration:** SDEP's focus on regional integration—particularly through programs like COMSHIP (seed harmonization) and COMBIP (biotechnology regulation)—demonstrates AfDB's commitment to fostering cross-border cooperation. By investing in initiatives that facilitate the free movement of agricultural inputs and promote intra-African trade, AfDB will strengthen its leadership in supporting regional economic integration in line with its Integrate Africa priority.
- **Drive Gender and Youth Empowerment:** SDEP's emphasis on inclusive development, particularly through its training and capacity-building programs, aligns with AfDB's goals of gender equality and youth empowerment. By investing in projects that provide women and youth with access to resources, technology, and skills training, AfDB can demonstrate its leadership in socially inclusive development that leaves no one behind.
- **Promote Green Growth and Climate Resilience:** As climate change continues to threaten African agriculture, AfDB's support of SDEP's climate-smart agricultural practices positions the bank as a leader in promoting green growth. SDEP's focus on sustainable resource management—through circular economy principles and renewable energy—ensures that AfDB is seen as a champion of climate resilience and environmentally responsible development in Africa.

By demonstrating leadership through its participation in SDEP, AfDB will not only address critical developmental challenges in the COMESA region but also set a precedent for sustainable, inclusive, and scalable solutions across Africa. This positions AfDB as a strategic leader in driving Africa's agricultural transformation and regional economic integration, aligned with the bank's overarching mission to improve the quality of life for the people of Africa.



6. AfDB's Critical Role in Accelerating SDEP's Impact – Lessons from the G20: The G20 policy agenda, which emphasizes trade liberalization, sustainable industrial policy, and global collaboration, highlights the urgent need for programs like SDEP to scale quickly. With global economic challenges such as climate change, trade protectionism, and supply chain disruptions, there has never been a more critical time for LMICs to leverage international trade opportunities and sustainable development models.

The G20's recommendations for promoting public-private partnerships (PPPs) and facilitating the adoption of green technologies directly support the goals of SDEP. These international frameworks present a golden opportunity for AfDB to demonstrate leadership by accelerating its commitment to SDEP. AfDB's financial support and strategic leadership are crucial to unlocking the full potential of PPPs, which can drive sustainable development in Africa's most vulnerable regions. By delaying its participation, AfDB risks missing an opportunity to align with global priorities and contribute to the continent's ability to engage in green economic transformation.

Furthermore, the G20's focus on trade liberalization in the agricultural sector aligns with SDEP's work in harmonizing seed trade (COMSHIP) and expanding access to sustainable agricultural inputs (e.g., fertilizers via COMFREP). These initiatives require immediate scaling to meet the needs of smallholder farmers across the COMESA region. AfDB's hesitance to fully commit to financing these efforts creates a bottleneck that undermines not only SDEP's impact but also the continent's ability to participate in global value chains.

AfDB's participation is essential for establishing investment-ready projects that can attract further private sector involvement—a key focus of both SDEP's PPPaaS model and the G20's policy recommendations. By facilitating timely investments in critical infrastructure and agricultural value chains, AfDB can lead the way in reducing economic inequality and promoting inclusive growth—both of which are central to the G20 and SDEP's shared mission.

To capitalize on the G20's global momentum and avoid further delays, AfDB must act swiftly to:

1. Accelerate funding commitments for infrastructure projects within SDEP, particularly those that align with G20 priorities such as trade facilitation, green technology, and inclusive growth.
2. Demonstrate leadership in Africa's sustainable development by actively supporting public-private collaborations through PPP frameworks that drive investments into critical sectors like agriculture and renewable energy.
3. Position itself as a global leader in responding to international trade and sustainability policies, ensuring Africa's voice is represented in G20 discussions by scaling SDEP's transformative programs.

By playing a more proactive role, AfDB can help bridge the gap between global policy frameworks and local development solutions, ensuring that Africa is not left behind in the green industrial revolution. The urgency of these actions cannot be overstated, and we look to AfDB to fulfill its leadership role in making SDEP—and the African continent—a model for sustainable, inclusive growth.



7. AfDB's Early Commitment Unlocks Blended Finance and Catalyzes Private Sector Engagement: The African Development Bank (AfDB) is in a unique position to play a catalytic role in the Social Development and Empowering Programme (SDEP) by committing early and unlocking the next stage of blended finance. SDEP has already secured \$100 million USD for technology implementation and another \$100 million USD for job creation, but these funds are contingent on an initial commitment from AfDB, which is seen as a critical quality assurance measure for further private sector engagement.

This is where AfDB can demonstrate its leadership in mobilizing blended finance, where public and concessional funding helps to de-risk and leverage private capital. AfDB's early commitment will:

- Unlock additional private sector investment by showing confidence in SDEP's sustainability and impact.
- Kickstart the implementation of key infrastructure projects, including the ECHO platform, which will drive sustainable agricultural development and ensure that high-quality inputs and renewable energy solutions are available to rural communities.

As an early mover, AfDB not only de-risks the investment for private partners but also secures a strategic position in leading Africa's transition toward green industrialization and inclusive economic growth. This model will serve as a blueprint for blended finance in other sectors, setting AfDB as a global leader in public-private partnerships that deliver measurable social and environmental returns.

8. Risk Mitigation: Focus on Feasibility and Practical Implementation Beyond Politics

A major strength of SDEP lies in its apolitical nature. EUSL, as a non-profit organization hired by COMESA, is strictly focused on feasibility and practical implementation. Unlike many development programs that get entangled in bureaucratic delays or political agendas, SDEP is designed to sidestep political obstacles and concentrate on what is possible to implement on the ground.

Our approach ensures that we:

- Remain focused on results, prioritizing the agricultural value chains, infrastructure, and sustainable development initiatives that directly impact local communities.
- Avoid political interference and corruption, by concentrating on delivering real solutions to smallholder farmers and agribusinesses without getting involved in governmental complexities. This allows us to act swiftly and efficiently.

By partnering with EUSL and COMESA, AfDB is investing in a practical, outcome-driven initiative that will continue regardless of the political landscape, ensuring long-term stability and results-oriented development.

9. Digital Innovation and Climate-Responsive Trade Policies

SDEP, and particularly the ECHO platform and the Global Social Impact Alliance (GSIA) as a host, are at the forefront of digital innovation and climate-resilient development. The digitally demanding nature of these platforms ensures that we provide satellite technology robust enough to monitor and manage ECHO's renewable energy and water management systems from remote locations. This level of digital integration also means that the villages and communities that form around agricultural hubs gain



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access to the digital tools needed for everyday life, such as education, financial services, and healthcare.

Beyond the immediate benefits of digital monitoring and management, SDEP's approach aligns directly with global climate goals and the G20's trade policy innovations:

- By integrating digital technology into the heart of SDEP's operations, we create sustainable, tech-enabled ecosystems that foster economic growth while mitigating the risks of climate change.
- The technology transfer from Sweden—which plays a key role in the digital infrastructure and innovation powering SDEP—offers a unique opportunity for the G20 to pilot their trade and climate policies in real-world settings, ensuring they are practical and scalable.

AfDB's investment in SDEP not only supports Africa's journey toward digital transformation and sustainable development but also positions the continent as a leader in testing and refining the green trade and digital policies of the future. By leveraging Swedish innovation and G20 policy frameworks, SDEP serves as a testbed for forward-thinking, climate-friendly trade initiatives that can be scaled globally.

Summary

These sections articulate AfDB's critical role in both the PPP model and in demonstrating leadership in Africa's development landscape. The **Social Development and Empowering Programme (SDEP)** offers AfDB a unique opportunity to advance its **High 5 priorities** while driving significant economic, social, and environmental impact in the **COMESA** region. By investing in SDEP, AfDB not only contributes to transforming agriculture and food security in one of Africa's most populous regions but also establishes a scalable, replicable model for sustainable development across the continent.

AfDB's financial participation and leadership in the **PPP model** will ensure that the program achieves its ambitious goals, creating lasting benefits for millions of Africans and strengthening AfDB's legacy as a champion of African development.

Collaboration with UNDP and the Effort Project: Strengthening the Social Development and Empowering Programme (SDEP)

The **Social Development and Empowering Programme (SDEP)** is not only a standalone initiative but also a collaborative platform that integrates key partners like **UNDP** and the **Effort Project**. By merging with SDEP, these two global players bring unique expertise, resources, and networks that significantly enhance the program's impact, scale, and sustainability.

1. UNDP's Role in SDEP: Governance, Inclusivity, and Alignment with Global Development Goals

The **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** brings a wealth of experience in **sustainable development, governance, and inclusive growth**, all of which are core to the success of SDEP. UNDP's alignment with the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** makes it an ideal partner to ensure that SDEP's initiatives are both locally impactful and globally relevant.

- **Governance and Capacity Building:** UNDP will play a key role in enhancing the **governance structures** within SDEP. Through its expertise in governance reform and institutional strengthening, UNDP will ensure that SDEP's programs—particularly those involving cross-border trade, regulatory harmonization, and public-private partnerships (PPPs)—are implemented effectively. UNDP will help create the necessary frameworks for regulatory alignment in sectors such as seed trade (COMSHIP) and biotechnology (COMBIP), fostering a conducive environment for agricultural innovation and trade.
- **Inclusivity and Gender Empowerment:** UNDP has a strong track record in promoting **gender equality** and **social inclusion**. By integrating UNDP's methodologies and programs, SDEP will ensure that women and youth play a central role in the agricultural value chains. This is particularly relevant for programs like **CEHA** (horticulture clusters), where women already form a significant portion of the workforce. UNDP's involvement will ensure that the benefits of SDEP's initiatives—such as training, access to resources, and market opportunities—are equitably distributed across all social groups.
- **Alignment with the SDGs:** UNDP will ensure that SDEP's projects contribute directly to the achievement of the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. From **SDG 1** (No Poverty) and **SDG 2** (Zero Hunger) to **SDG 8** (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and **SDG 13** (Climate Action), UNDP will ensure that SDEP's impact is measurable and aligned with global development standards. This partnership will not only strengthen the program's international credibility but also make it more attractive to global donors and financial institutions, including AfDB.
- **Risk Management and Monitoring:** UNDP's vast experience in monitoring and evaluation will enhance **SDEP's capacity for impact assessment**. UNDP will establish robust monitoring frameworks to track progress, measure outcomes, and identify risks early on, ensuring that SDEP remains adaptable and accountable throughout its implementation. This will include **KPIs** related to poverty reduction, job creation, and environmental sustainability, which are critical to attracting and retaining international funding.



2. The Effort Project: Urban Sustainability, Circular Economy, and PPP Expertise

The **Effort Project** brings a wealth of expertise in **urban sustainability**, the **circular economy**, and the creation of **public-private partnerships (PPPs)**. By merging with SDEP, the Effort Project helps ensure that the program's goals are not only achieved but also embedded within a long-term vision for sustainable economic development.

- **Circular Economy and Resource Efficiency:** The Effort Project specializes in designing **circular communities** where resources are reused and recycled to minimize waste and promote environmental sustainability. By integrating these principles into SDEP, the Effort Project will enhance programs like **COMFREP** (fertilizer), where organic waste can be transformed into valuable agricultural inputs. In collaboration with SDEP's **ECHO platform**, the Effort Project will provide sustainable water management, energy solutions, and waste recycling infrastructure, ensuring that agricultural hubs and rural communities operate efficiently with minimal environmental impact.

For example, in the horticultural clusters under **CEHA**, the Effort Project will help establish **waste-to-resource systems**, where by-products of agricultural production (such as organic waste from fruit processing) can be recycled into compost or energy. This creates self-sustaining systems that not only improve productivity but also reduce costs and environmental footprints.

- **Urban Sustainability and Agribusiness Development:** The Effort Project's experience in **urban planning and sustainability** will be key to integrating agricultural value chains into urban economies. This is particularly important for SDEP's efforts to develop **agribusiness hubs** and **processing clusters** in urban and peri-urban areas. The Effort Project will help design these hubs to be energy-efficient and environmentally sustainable, using cutting-edge technologies to optimize logistics, reduce energy consumption, and ensure that waste is minimized.

In cities and towns where agriculture meets industry, such as through **horticulture processing** and seed distribution, the Effort Project will help ensure that infrastructure is resilient, scalable, and aligned with both urban and rural needs. This will drive urban-rural linkages, enhancing the economic integration of smallholder farmers into larger markets.

- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):** The Effort Project has extensive experience in facilitating **PPPs** that combine public sector goals with private sector investment and innovation. Through SDEP's **Global Social Impact Alliance (GSIA)**, the Effort Project will strengthen the **PPPaaS (PPP as a Service)** model, ensuring that private investors are engaged in developing critical agricultural infrastructure, such as **bioprotectant production centers (COMBIHAP)** and **seed certification labs (COMSHIP)**.

By leveraging the Effort Project's expertise, SDEP will be able to attract more private sector funding for agricultural development and infrastructure projects. This PPP model will create opportunities for both local and international businesses to invest in sustainable agriculture, contributing to job creation and economic growth.

3. Synergy Between SDEP, UNDP, and the Effort Project

The integration of **UNDP** and the **Effort Project** into SDEP creates a powerful synergy that enhances the program's reach and impact. By merging with SDEP, both organizations will help to:

- **Ensure Long-Term Sustainability:** UNDP's governance and risk management frameworks, combined with the Effort Project's circular economy principles, will ensure that SDEP's initiatives are sustainable in the long run. Together, they will help reduce resource dependency,



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improve resilience to climate change, and promote efficient resource use in agriculture and rural development.

- **Expand Regional and Global Reach:** UNDP's global presence and network will help SDEP scale its projects beyond the COMESA region, making them replicable in other parts of Africa and internationally. The Effort Project's connections to urban planning and development initiatives will further broaden SDEP's scope, ensuring that agricultural development is integrated into broader **urban sustainability strategies**.
- **Attract Global Investment:** The collaboration between SDEP, UNDP, and the Effort Project will make the program more attractive to international donors, financial institutions, and private investors. With UNDP's global development expertise and the Effort Project's success in facilitating PPPs, SDEP will be well-positioned to secure the **long-term financing** it needs to scale its impact.

The collaboration between **SDEP**, **UNDP**, and the **Effort Project** represents a merger of strengths that will drive sustainable development and agricultural transformation in the COMESA region. Together, these organizations will ensure that SDEP not only achieves its immediate goals but also sets a foundation for long-term, scalable impact that aligns with global development standards and sustainable practices. This partnership will enhance the program's ability to deliver measurable, inclusive, and environmentally sustainable outcomes, positioning it as a model for **sustainable development** across Africa and beyond.

G20 Pathways for Reconciliation

Introduction

The **G20 Pathways for Reconciliation** document addresses the growing complexities of balancing **industrial policies**, **international trade**, and **sustainability** in an increasingly fragmented global economy. With rising trends of **protectionism** and **new industrial policies (NIPs)**, particularly in advanced economies, the document explores the unintended consequences these policies have on **emerging markets** and **low-income countries (EMDEs)**. As countries seek to bolster their own industries—especially in green technologies—through trade-distorting subsidies, global trade imbalances and economic inequalities are exacerbated.

The G20 aims to foster a more **equitable global trading system** by proposing frameworks that mitigate the distortions caused by subsidies, encourage the **diffusion of green technologies**, and create platforms for **multilateral dialogue** and **compensation**. By reconciling the needs of advanced economies with the development priorities of low-income countries, the G20 sets out a pathway for **sustainable and inclusive global economic growth**.

Summary of the G20 Document

The **G20 Pathways for Reconciliation** document outlines key challenges and proposals aimed at balancing **industrial policies**, **international trade**, and **sustainability** in the face of growing **geo-economic fragmentation** and **climate change**. In recent years, advanced economies have increasingly relied on **subsidies** and **new industrial policies (NIPs)** to safeguard their industries, particularly for **non-economic objectives** such as geopolitical concerns, supply chain resilience, and climate change mitigation. While these policies benefit large economies, they pose significant risks to **emerging markets** and **low-income countries (EMDEs)**, which often lack the fiscal space to compete with such measures.

The report highlights the rising trend of **trade-distorting subsidies**, particularly in sectors like green technology, and explores how these subsidies create **market inefficiencies** that disproportionately harm developing economies. The G20 seeks to address these challenges by proposing a **framework** to regulate and cap trade-distorting subsidies (classified into **amber**, **green**, and **blue boxes** based on their level of distortion). This framework would allow wealthier nations to maintain some support for strategic industries while establishing mechanisms to **compensate** countries negatively affected by these policies.

In addition to addressing subsidies, the document emphasizes the need for **global cooperation** to fund the **diffusion of green technologies** to developing nations. This involves creating an **international fund**, partially financed by the subsidies that advanced economies deploy domestically. The goal is to ensure that EMDEs can participate in the **global green revolution** by accessing the technologies needed to mitigate and adapt to climate change.

Furthermore, the document stresses the importance of creating a platform for **dialogue and compensation** among nations affected by trade-distorting policies, modeled after existing **WTO** mechanisms for resolving **trade disputes**. This platform would aim to resolve conflicts through cooperative negotiations rather than confrontational legal processes, making it easier for affected countries to secure compensation or reforms without triggering trade wars.

The G20 also grapples with the broader implications of **nationalist industrial policies**. On one hand, such policies can foster **innovation**, particularly in green industries, and protect national security interests. On the other hand, they risk exacerbating global economic inequalities, particularly in **lower-**



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income countries. The G20 proposes balancing these competing interests by recognizing the legitimacy of certain subsidies, particularly for climate change, while setting limits to prevent **excessive trade distortions.**

Ultimately, the report calls for **multilateral cooperation** to address these challenges, ensuring that emerging and low-income countries are not left behind in the global economic system. By creating a fairer and more balanced approach to industrial policies and trade, the G20 aims to reconcile the needs of wealthier nations with the realities of developing economies, fostering a more equitable and sustainable global economy.

Concept Note: Aligning SDEP with G20 Policy on International Trade, Sustainability, and Industrial Policy

Introduction

The **Social Development and Empowering Programme (SDEP)**, along with its key partners—**UNDP**, the **Effort Project**, **STUNS**, and leading academic institutions—is uniquely positioned to contribute to the G20's agenda on reconciling **industrial policy, international trade, and sustainability**. As the G20 looks to address the challenges posed by **neo-protectionism** and the increasing reliance on **new industrial policies (NIPs)** by advanced economies, SDEP offers a model for **inclusive economic growth** that benefits **low and middle-income countries (LMICs)**.

With the resurgence of trade-distorting subsidies and policies favoring local production, the global economic landscape has become challenging for emerging economies. The G20's focus on **trade liberalization, green technology adoption, and managing the negative spillovers** from these policies aligns closely with SDEP's mission. SDEP is not only a platform for **agricultural transformation** but also a catalyst for sustainable international cooperation that can mitigate the negative impacts of protectionist industrial policies.

1. SDEP and Trade Liberalization for Sustainable Growth

The G20 has emphasized the need for more open trade policies, particularly for sectors where developing countries hold a **comparative advantage**. In this context, SDEP's integration of **COMESA** programs such as **COMFREP** (Fertilizer Regional Programme) and **COMSHIP** (Seed Harmonisation Implementation Plan) promotes **cross-border agricultural trade**:

- **Trade Harmonization:** Through the harmonization of **seed and biosafety regulations**, SDEP enables smoother intra-regional trade in agricultural inputs, directly addressing the G20's call for liberalized trade. The facilitation of seed trade through **COMSHIP** ensures that **smallholder farmers** have access to high-quality seeds, enhancing productivity and allowing them to compete in **international markets**.
- **Green Technology Diffusion:** SDEP's focus on eco-friendly agricultural practices, such as the use of **bioprotectants** under the **COMBIHAP** program, contributes to the **global green industrial revolution**. These efforts complement the G20's objective of **promoting green technology adoption** in LMICs, helping them transition to **sustainable agricultural practices** while accessing new markets.

2. Industrial Policy and Economic Security

The G20 highlights the complexities of reconciling industrial policies aimed at **economic security** with the broader objectives of global trade. SDEP, through its **Global Social Impact Alliance (GSIA)** and the **PPP as a Service (PPPaaS)** model, provides a framework that aligns **public-private partnerships (PPPs)** with sustainable trade and development objectives:

- **Reducing Trade Distortions:** By investing in agricultural infrastructure, such as **seed certification centers** and **horticultural processing hubs** under **CEHA** (COMESA-EAC Horticultural Accelerator), SDEP addresses potential distortions caused by **protectionist policies**. These initiatives align with the G20's goal of balancing national industrial strategies with **global trade cooperation**.



- **Public-Private Collaboration:** Through GSIA's PPP model, SDEP ensures that investments in critical sectors like **agriculture** and **renewable energy** are inclusive and benefit both public and private stakeholders. This mirrors the G20's push for collaboration that mitigates the negative impacts of subsidies while fostering **sustainable industrial growth**.

3. Resilient and Efficient Global Value Chains (GVCs)

The G20's focus on **resilience and efficiency in global value chains** (GVCs) is critical in the face of global shocks, including pandemics and geopolitical tensions. SDEP's infrastructure solutions, particularly through the **ECHO platform**, strengthen **agricultural supply chains**:

- **Supply Chain Resilience:** ECHO's **modular infrastructure** supports renewable energy and water management, essential for stabilizing agricultural production even in times of external shocks. This is particularly crucial for **smallholder farmers** and **agribusinesses** in LMICs who are vulnerable to supply chain disruptions.
- **Efficient Resource Use:** By integrating **circular economy principles** through the **Effort Project**, SDEP ensures that agricultural systems are optimized for **sustainable resource use**. This reduces dependency on external inputs, making global value chains more resilient and contributing to **climate-smart agriculture**.

4. Tackling Economic Inequality through Inclusive Growth

The G20 stresses the importance of addressing **economic inequality**, a challenge exacerbated by the current wave of industrial policies. SDEP's partnership with **UNDP**, with its focus on **inclusive governance** and **gender empowerment**, directly tackles this issue:

- **Empowering Women and Youth:** Through vocational training programs under SDEP, particularly in horticulture (CEHA), women and youth are provided with the skills and resources necessary to engage in profitable agribusinesses. This supports the G20's objective of fostering **inclusive economic growth** that reduces inequality within and among countries.
- **Access to Green Technologies:** SDEP's provision of **climate-resilient technologies** for **low-income countries** helps close the technology gap between advanced economies and LMICs. Through collaboration with **STUNS** and **higher education partners**, SDEP facilitates the **transfer of knowledge and innovation** from developed to developing countries, ensuring that LMICs are not left behind in the global green revolution.

5. Leadership in Global Trade and Multilateral Cooperation

The G20 seeks to reinforce **multilateral cooperation** in global trade, particularly in managing the **negative spillovers** of industrial policies. SDEP's partnership framework—incorporating global stakeholders like UNDP, the Effort Project, and STUNS—demonstrates how **international collaboration** can drive **sustainable economic development**:

- **Multilateral Collaboration:** SDEP's public-private partnerships and collaboration with international organizations like **UNDP** ensure that its development initiatives are **globally aligned** and **scalable**. By addressing both national development goals and global trade standards, SDEP sets a precedent for inclusive, sustainable development.
- **Driving Green Innovation:** Through its integration of **renewable energy** and **circular economy models**, SDEP demonstrates leadership in addressing **climate change**—one of the G20's most critical non-economic objectives. By promoting **green technologies** and **sustainable practices**,



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SDEP contributes to the global effort to mitigate climate change while fostering economic growth.

Summary

The **Social Development and Empowering Programme (SDEP)** aligns with the G20's agenda on **reconciling industrial policies with international trade and sustainability**. Through its integration of public-private partnerships, sustainable infrastructure, and inclusive development practices, SDEP provides a model for **low and middle-income countries (LMICs)** to benefit from global trade liberalization and green technology adoption. By participating in the G20's policy discussions, SDEP offers a scalable, actionable framework that promotes **sustainable trade, economic equality, and global resilience** in value chains.

G20 SUPPORT SDEP AND SDEP SUPPORT G20

The relationship between the G20 policy agenda and the **Social Development and Empowering Programme (SDEP)** is one of mutual reinforcement. On one hand, the G20's focus on trade liberalization, industrial policies, and sustainability creates a framework of global cooperation that can significantly support the **scaling and success** of SDEP. On the other hand, **SDEP**, with its integrated model and public-private partnerships, can serve as a **blueprint for implementing G20 policies**, especially in **low and middle-income countries (LMICs)**.

1. How G20 Policy Can Support SDEP

The G20's efforts to reconcile **international trade, industrial policy, and sustainability** provide an international framework that directly aligns with the objectives of SDEP. Here's how:

a. Financial and Institutional Support for Trade Liberalization

The G20's push for **trade liberalization**—particularly in sectors where LMICs have comparative advantages—offers an international policy environment that is conducive to SDEP's goals. SDEP's integration of **agricultural trade facilitation** programs such as **COMSHIP** (seed harmonization) and **COMFREP** (fertilizer distribution) aligns well with G20 recommendations to reduce trade barriers and promote fair competition in **agricultural inputs**.

- **Support through Trade Policies:** By promoting open trade policies, the G20 can help remove **tariff and non-tariff barriers** that often hinder the cross-border trade of seeds, fertilizers, and other agricultural inputs. This would make it easier for **smallholder farmers** in the COMESA region to access high-quality inputs, which are key to boosting productivity and improving food security.
- **Encouraging Green Technology Transfer:** The G20's emphasis on funding and disseminating **green technologies** for LMICs directly supports SDEP's work in promoting sustainable agricultural practices. SDEP's **bioprotectants (COMBIHAP)** and **climate-smart horticulture** programs could receive backing from **green funds** or technology transfer initiatives promoted by G20 members. This would accelerate the adoption of environmentally friendly technologies in regions that lack the fiscal capacity to innovate on their own.



b. Public-Private Partnership Frameworks

The G20 encourages **public-private partnerships (PPPs)** as a way to foster innovation and sustainable industrial policies. SDEP's own **PPP as a Service (PPPaaS)** model, under the **Global Social Impact Alliance (GSIA)**, aligns perfectly with this global call for enhanced collaboration between governments, international organizations, and private investors.

- **De-risking Investments:** The G20 could facilitate the **de-risking** of investments in key sectors like **agriculture and renewable energy** by endorsing multilateral frameworks that attract private investment. SDEP, through its PPPaaS model, could benefit from **blended finance models** supported by G20 members, helping secure long-term funding for projects such as **fertilizer hubs** (COMFREP) and **seed certification centers** (COMSHIP).
- **Technical Assistance and Capacity Building:** The G20's focus on **capacity building** for LMICs can further strengthen SDEP's initiatives. SDEP's vocational training and capacity-building programs, in collaboration with partners like **UNDP** and **higher education institutions**, can be scaled more effectively with G20-endorsed frameworks that provide technical expertise and training resources to develop **sustainable agricultural systems**.

c. Global Trade Governance and Policy Coordination

The G20's role in **global trade governance** can help streamline the regulatory environment for SDEP's cross-border trade initiatives, particularly in the **agricultural sector**.

- **Policy Alignment:** By establishing international guidelines that reduce the risk of **protectionist policies** in agriculture, the G20 can support the free flow of agricultural goods and services that SDEP relies on. This would encourage more seamless **cross-border trade** of high-quality seeds, fertilizers, and horticultural products, which are critical for the **economic growth of smallholder farmers**.

2. How SDEP Can Lead the Way in Realizing G20 Policies

SDEP, through its integration of sustainable development practices, PPPs, and global collaboration, offers a **scalable model** that aligns with and even accelerates the realization of the G20's objectives. Here's how SDEP can help **lead the way** in realizing the G20's policies around international trade and sustainable industrial policies:

a. Setting an Example in Trade Liberalization

SDEP's focus on **harmonizing agricultural trade regulations** and its work through programs like **COMSHIP** and **COMFREP** can provide a **working example** of how LMICs can reduce trade barriers, increase productivity, and foster **regional integration**.

- **Regional Trade Facilitation:** SDEP's harmonization of **seed certification** and its facilitation of cross-border fertilizer trade through COMESA show how regional blocs can collaborate on trade, even in politically fragmented environments. This regional trade facilitation can serve as a model for the G20's vision of **inclusive trade liberalization**, particularly in agriculture.
- **Technology and Innovation Diffusion:** By focusing on **green technologies**, SDEP shows how technology can be rapidly diffused across borders when coupled with strong public-private collaboration. This can provide an important **blueprint for the G20** as it looks to scale green technology adoption in developing countries.



b. Championing Public-Private Partnerships

SDEP's innovative approach to **PPPs**, with its **PPPaaS model** under GSIA, demonstrates a scalable model for financing sustainable development projects, especially in **agriculture and energy**.

- **Leading PPP Development:** SDEP's success in mobilizing private investment for projects like **agricultural infrastructure, horticultural processing, and bioprotectant manufacturing** can serve as a **case study** for G20 policymakers. By demonstrating how PPPs can drive sustainable development in LMICs, SDEP sets a standard for **blended financing models** that are both socially and commercially viable.
- **Replication Across Sectors:** The PPPaaS model used by SDEP can be replicated in other sectors, showing how **private capital, public investment, and international development finance** can come together to solve critical issues like food security, trade inequality, and climate change. This directly supports the G20's aim of promoting **global economic resilience** through **sustainable investment frameworks**.

c. Supporting Sustainable Industrial Policy

SDEP's work in promoting **circular economies**, particularly through the **Effort Project**, aligns closely with the G20's push for **sustainable industrial policies** that reduce environmental harm while supporting economic growth.

- **Circular Economy Leadership:** SDEP's use of **waste-to-fertilizer systems, energy-efficient agricultural hubs, and climate-smart practices** sets a precedent for how LMICs can industrialize without relying on **polluting technologies**. The G20 can look to SDEP's efforts in creating **self-sustaining agricultural communities** as a model for **sustainable industrialization**.
- **Green Growth Framework:** SDEP's integration of green energy solutions, through the **ECHO platform**, shows how renewable energy can power industrial growth in rural and urban settings. This directly supports the G20's call for more investments in **green industrial policies**, especially for **developing economies** that are often sidelined in global trade discussions.

d. Promoting Inclusive Development

SDEP's focus on **gender empowerment** and the inclusion of **women and youth** in agriculture and trade provides a **socially inclusive model** that aligns with the G20's goal of reducing economic inequality.

- **Empowerment through Vocational Training:** By offering vocational training in agriculture, processing, and entrepreneurship, SDEP demonstrates how **inclusive policies** can elevate marginalized groups and improve social equality. This aligns with the G20's focus on **inclusive growth** and provides a replicable model for how inclusive development can be tied to global trade and industrial policies.

Summary

The **G20 policy framework** can play a critical role in scaling and supporting the **Social Development and Empowering Programme (SDEP)**, especially through trade liberalization, PPP frameworks, and green technology funding. Conversely, SDEP—through its alignment with global trade, industrial policies, and sustainability—can **lead the way in realizing the G20's vision** of a more equitable, sustainable, and inclusive global economy.



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By showcasing how LMICs can harmonize trade regulations, implement public-private partnerships, and industrialize sustainably, SDEP provides a **scalable and practical blueprint** that can guide G20 policymakers in their efforts to reconcile global trade with sustainable development. This mutually reinforcing relationship underscores the importance of **international collaboration** and **shared solutions** in addressing the challenges of the 21st century.

Final Words

The integration of **ACTESA's five key programs**—COMBIHAP, COMBIP, COMFREP, COMSHIP, and CEHA—into the **Social Development and Empowering Programme (SDEP)** represents a powerful convergence of **sustainable agriculture, trade harmonization, and inclusive economic development**. By merging these initiatives under the SDEP framework, we unlock new opportunities to scale their impact, foster cross-border collaboration, and empower the **smallholder farmers, women, and youth** who are critical to the region's growth.

The assessment of this integration highlights the shared vision between **ACTESA** and SDEP, where the complementary strengths of each program align with the core pillars of **sustainability, technology, and capacity building**. Through the support of **EUSL, UNDP**, and our network of global partners, SDEP provides a robust foundation for achieving the **long-term goals** of improved **food security, climate resilience, and economic empowerment**.

Moving forward, this unified approach positions us to drive the transformation of **agricultural value chains** across the **COMESA** region. The **ECHO platform** will deliver vital infrastructure, the **PPPaaS model** will attract critical investment, and the **vocational training programs** will ensure that all stakeholders have the skills needed to succeed. Together, we create an ecosystem that not only addresses the immediate challenges of agricultural productivity and trade but also sets the stage for sustainable and inclusive development for generations to come.

As we proceed with the next steps, our focus remains on **execution and impact**—implementing practical solutions, leveraging technology, and maintaining our commitment to **feasibility** and **accountability**. By working together with our partners, including AfDB and private investors, we can ensure that these efforts translate into **real, measurable outcomes** that benefit both local communities and the broader **global trade system**.

This document has outlined how these programs can align with SDEP to create a future of **prosperity, sustainability, and resilience** for the COMESA region. We are confident that this integration will serve as a model for how thoughtful collaboration and innovative development strategies can transform regions and lives.

The Integration of ACTESA's Agricultural Programs into the Social Development and Empowering Programme (SDEP)

In a move to drive sustainable growth and trade in the **COMESA region**, ACTESA approached EUSL with a pivotal question: Can their five key agricultural programs—**COMBIHAP**, **COMBIP**, **COMFREP**, **COMSHIP**, and **CEHA**—be merged into the **Social Development and Empowering Programme (SDEP)**? This document lays out EUSL's vision for how these programs align with SDEP's comprehensive approach to **sustainable agriculture**, **cross-border trade facilitation**, and **inclusive economic empowerment**.

Through detailed analysis, the document explores how SDEP's infrastructure solutions, such as the **ECHO platform**, and its innovative **public-private partnership model (PPPaaS)** can scale these programs to reach millions of smallholder farmers, create jobs, and drive sustainable industrial growth. With strategic partnerships including **UNDP**, the **Effort Project**, and **global universities**, SDEP offers a holistic framework to address food security, climate resilience, and digital transformation across Africa.

As the world's attention shifts to global trade policies and sustainable development at the **upcoming G20 meeting**, this document also explores how SDEP's model could serve as a **testbed for new international trade policies**, facilitating **green economic collaboration** between Africa and global partners like Sweden.

This is the blueprint for a transformative future—where agriculture, sustainability, and trade converge to create lasting impact for millions in the COMESA region and beyond.

