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ADDITIONS TO THE COMESA & ACTESA PROGRAMMES FOR SDEP PDF

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Additions to COMESA & ACTESA programmes for SDEP pdf

Introduction to Recent Additions

Following recent discussions with ACTESA and insights gathered during the meeting, several key areas were identified for further development within the Social Development and Empowering Programme (SDEP). These updates focus on the harmonization of critical programs—COMBIHAP, COMBIIP, and COMSHIP—and SDEP's potential role in shaping and implementing international trade policies, both within the COMESA region and globally.

In light of these discussions, EUSL has expanded on the alignment of SDEP with EU policies, emphasizing how the Global Social Impact Alliance (GSIA) can act as the governance platform to ensure compliance and implementation of EU-aligned policies for agricultural products across Africa. Additionally, the updates explore the growing role of GMOs under the COMBIIP program, highlighting their potential positive impact when used responsibly within a regulated framework.

Lastly, SDEP's emergence as a key player in international trade governance—leveraging EU frameworks and the support of GSIA—presents a new avenue for ensuring trade compliance and facilitating global market access for African agricultural products.

Harmonization of COMBIHAP, COMBIIP, and COMSHIP under SDEP

The **Social Development and Empowering Programme (SDEP)** is strategically positioned to support the **harmonization** of policies across the **COMESA region**, particularly in addressing key agricultural programs such as **COMBIHAP** (Bioprotectants Harmonisation Programme), **COMBIIP** (Biosafety and Biotechnology Implementation Plan), and **COMSHIP** (Seed Harmonisation Implementation Plan). By aligning these programs under a unified framework, SDEP ensures that cross-border trade and agricultural innovation are fostered in a sustainable and inclusive manner.

1. COMBIHAP: Bioprotection and Organic Fertilizers

SDEP actively supports the harmonization of **bioprotection policies**, ensuring that organic fertilizers and bioprotectants can be seamlessly traded and applied across COMESA member states. This policy alignment not only increases access to safe and environmentally friendly agricultural inputs but also strengthens **food security** and reduces reliance on chemical pesticides. SDEP's infrastructure, particularly through the **ECHO platform**, provides the necessary support to facilitate the **production, distribution, and application** of bioprotectants, helping farmers adopt sustainable practices across borders.

2. COMBIIP: Biotechnology, Biosafety, and the Positive Role of GMOs

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) are often met with skepticism due to concerns about their potential environmental and health impacts. However, under SDEP's integration of **COMBIIP**, GMOs are seen as a **powerful tool for improving agricultural productivity** and climate resilience when properly regulated. Through careful biosafety measures and international best practices, GMOs can:



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- **Boost Crop Yields:** By incorporating genetic traits that enhance **pest resistance** or **drought tolerance**, GMOs enable farmers to achieve higher productivity, especially in areas affected by climate variability.
- **Reduce Environmental Impact:** GMOs can reduce the need for chemical pesticides and fertilizers, promoting **more sustainable agricultural practices**.
- **Support Food Security:** In the context of **COMESA**, GMOs provide the opportunity to improve **food security**, as they allow for the development of **high-yielding, nutritious crops** suited to the region's diverse climates.

By harmonizing policies on **biosafety** and **biotechnology** under COMBIIP, SDEP ensures that these technologies are applied responsibly and in ways that benefit smallholder farmers without compromising environmental safety. **Vocational training programs** under SDEP will also educate farmers and regulators about the safe use of GMOs, ensuring they contribute to **sustainable agricultural practices**.

3. COMSHIP: Seed Harmonization and Trade Facilitation

SDEP fully supports the harmonization efforts under **COMSHIP**, which focuses on aligning seed regulations and **certification processes** across the COMESA region. By doing so, farmers will have better access to **high-quality seeds** that meet international standards. Harmonizing seed certification will:

- **Improve Seed Availability:** Ensure that farmers across the region can access high-quality seeds that are both **regionally certified** and suitable for local growing conditions.
- **Facilitate Cross-Border Trade:** By aligning seed regulations, SDEP enables **seamless cross-border trade**, reducing barriers to seed movement across member states, which is critical to boosting productivity and regional integration.

SDEP's role in **vocational training** extends to educating farmers and seed distributors on the importance of using **certified seeds**, further driving agricultural productivity and market access.

Supporting and Harmonizing Horticultural Value Chains within SDEP

Horticultural value chains play a crucial role in the economic development of the **COMESA** region, particularly in improving livelihoods, generating income, and enhancing food security. During recent discussions, the development of value chains for high-potential crops like **avocados, onions, and potatoes** was emphasized as a key area of focus, particularly in **Eastern Africa**. These crops have significant export potential, and their successful integration into regional and international markets will require strong support for **infrastructure, logistics, and post-harvest handling**.

1. Horticulture as a Driver for Economic Growth

The horticulture sector has emerged as a major driver of **income generation** for smallholder farmers, especially for **women and youth** who are increasingly involved in these value chains. By focusing on the development and harmonization of policies that support **horticultural trade**, SDEP can enhance productivity and create opportunities for marginalized groups in rural areas.

- **Avocados, Onions, and Potatoes:** These crops were identified as having the potential to drive exports and create jobs across the region. Avocados, in particular, are in high demand internationally, with opportunities for export to **Europe** and other markets. Onions and potatoes remain staple crops with significant local and regional trade potential.

2. Harmonization of Horticultural Policies

For these value chains to flourish, **policy harmonization** across the region is essential. SDEP will play a key role in ensuring that the policies governing horticultural production, quality standards, and **post-harvest management** are aligned across **COMESA member states**, allowing for smoother cross-border trade.

- **Standards and Certification:** Harmonizing **quality standards** for avocados, onions, and potatoes will help ensure that produce from the COMESA region can meet **export requirements** and compete in international markets. This includes improving **certification** for both regional and global trade.

3. Infrastructure and Post-Harvest Handling

SDEP's **ECHO platform** provides critical infrastructure to support the horticultural value chains. Investments in **cold storage**, **processing facilities**, and **refrigerated transport** are crucial to extending the shelf life of these perishable crops, reducing post-harvest losses, and ensuring they reach markets in top condition.

- **Minimizing Waste:** One of the biggest challenges in horticulture is the significant **post-harvest losses** due to poor storage and transportation systems. By providing **modern cold chain solutions**, SDEP will help farmers preserve their crops, increase their profits, and reduce waste.

4. Empowering Women and Youth through Horticulture

The focus on horticulture provides a unique opportunity to empower **women and youth** in rural areas. These groups often face barriers to entry in more capital-intensive value chains but can thrive in horticulture with the right support. SDEP, through its vocational training programs, will provide **skills development**, **financial literacy**, and **market access** tools specifically designed for **smallholder farmers**, ensuring that women and youth play a central role in these value chains.

5. SDEP as a Catalyst for Regional and International Trade

Horticulture represents a major opportunity for both **intra-African trade** and **export markets** beyond the continent. By harmonizing the policies governing these value chains and improving infrastructure, SDEP supports the region's goals under the **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)** and ensures that horticultural products meet the necessary standards for export to markets like the **European Union** and **Asia**.

SDEP as a Policy Implementation Project for International Trade

In recent discussions, the role of SDEP as a **policy implementation project for international trade** has gained prominence, not just within Africa but also in fostering trade with global partners, particularly the **European Union (EU)**. The **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)** opens up tremendous opportunities for **intra-African trade**, and SDEP is well-positioned to lead efforts in ensuring that agricultural products meet **international standards** and can be traded efficiently across borders.

Global Social Impact Alliance (GSIA) as Project Owner and Policy Driver

The potential for **SDEP** to become a policy implementation leader within **international trading frameworks** is clear, and this can be realized through the **Global Social Impact Alliance (GSIA)**. As a **project and policy owner**, GSIA provides the necessary **governance structures** and **funding models** to support the large-scale adoption of SDEP's initiatives. GSIA can ensure that:



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- **Countries not qualified for financial support** still have access to SDEP's services through alternative funding routes.
- **International trade policies** between Africa and countries like the **EU** are implemented, facilitating trade partnerships and ensuring African countries meet the necessary **export standards**.

GSIA's role in policy implementation ensures that, even in cases where certain countries face limitations in **securing financial backing**, they can still access the benefits of SDEP, particularly in relation to **trade facilitation, infrastructure development, and green technology adoption**.

Policy for International Trading: Expanding SDEP's Reach

The discussion around **SDEP as a model for international trade policies** provides an opportunity to expand its impact, not only within Africa but globally. With the backing of **GSIA**, SDEP is positioned to drive the following key policy implementations:

- **Intra-African Trade:** By harmonizing agricultural policies and enabling the smooth cross-border movement of inputs like seeds, fertilizers, and bioprotectants, SDEP directly supports the goals of the **AfCFTA**, creating a unified market for African agricultural products.
- **Trade with the EU and Global Markets:** SDEP's alignment with **EU trade standards** ensures that African products meet the necessary requirements for export. This includes harmonized regulations on bioprotection, biosafety, and seed certification, making African agricultural products more competitive on the global stage.

With GSIA acting as a **policy owner** and governance platform, SDEP can ensure that these international trade policies are **implemented effectively**, benefiting farmers, agribusinesses, and trade partners across Africa and beyond.

Leveraging EU Policies and Governance for SDEP Compliance through GSIA

The **European Union (EU)** is widely recognized as one of the most **advanced** and **complex trading areas** in the world, particularly when it comes to **policies, regulations, and governance standards**. With a strong emphasis on **sustainability, quality assurance, and compliance**, the EU sets a high bar for international trade practices. Rather than attempting to **reinvent the wheel** with new governance frameworks for SDEP, the **Global Social Impact Alliance (GSIA)** will utilize the well-established EU policies and governance structures as a template for ensuring **SDEP's full compliance** in Africa.

1. Adopting EU Governance Standards

By aligning SDEP with **EU governance standards**, GSIA ensures that the program can seamlessly integrate into **global trade systems**. The EU's approach to **sustainability, green technology, and trade facilitation** provides a comprehensive model that:

- **Promotes transparency and accountability** in trade practices.
- Enforces **strict quality standards** for agricultural products, ensuring that crops produced under SDEP meet the highest **environmental** and **health** standards.
- Encourages the use of **circular economy principles** and **sustainable resource management**, which are already central to both the EU's agenda and SDEP's core mission.

By adopting these governance structures, SDEP ensures that African agricultural products are not only compliant with regional standards but are also ready for export to **global markets**, including the EU.



2. GSIA as the Policy Implementation Platform

The **Global Social Impact Alliance (GSIA)** will serve as the key **policy implementation platform** for adopting these EU governance standards across SDEP initiatives. GSIA will ensure that SDEP:

- **Implements EU-aligned policies** that streamline the processes of certification, trade, and export compliance, particularly in areas like **seed harmonization** (COMSHIP), **bioprotection** (COMBIHAP), and **biotechnology** (COMBIIP).
- Facilitates the adoption of **digital governance tools** to monitor compliance, allowing for real-time adjustments and efficient regulatory oversight.
- Creates a system where **African agricultural products** can easily meet the **requirements for entry** into European markets, making SDEP a model of **trade compliance** in Africa.

3. Seamless Integration into Global Trade

Through this alignment with **EU governance frameworks**, SDEP will have a unique advantage in ensuring its agricultural products are recognized as **compliant with international standards**. By adopting EU regulations for quality, safety, and sustainability, SDEP:

- Opens up African products to **broader global markets**, particularly the EU, where strict compliance is often a barrier to entry.
- Reduces the need for African countries to develop separate compliance mechanisms, as the **EU model** is recognized globally and ensures **cross-border trade** without additional hurdles.

In this way, SDEP and GSIA position Africa's agricultural output to not only thrive regionally but to meet **global demand** by adhering to proven, well-regulated frameworks.

4. SDEP as a Global Testbed for EU-Aligned Policies

In addition to compliance, **SDEP** can serve as a **global testbed** for **EU-aligned policies** in **Africa**. Through the partnership between GSIA and the EU, SDEP can:

- Test **policy frameworks** that foster **sustainable agricultural practices** in Africa, with the goal of scaling these practices across the continent.
- Promote **trade partnerships** between African countries and the EU, using SDEP's governance framework as the **gold standard** for future agricultural and industrial projects.
- Showcase how **climate-smart agriculture** and **circular economies**—which are already part of the EU's policy landscape—can be successfully implemented in Africa, promoting **environmental sustainability** alongside economic growth.

By implementing EU governance standards, GSIA ensures that **SDEP** becomes a leader in **compliant, sustainable trade** between Africa and the rest of the world.

Summary

The recent additions to the **Social Development and Empowering Programme (SDEP)** highlight the following key areas of growth:

1. Harmonization of COMBIHAP, COMBIIP, and COMSHIP:

- SDEP is playing a central role in the harmonization of agricultural policies across **COMESA**, ensuring that bioprotection agents, biotechnological innovations (such as **GMOs**), and seed certification processes are aligned for seamless cross-border trade.
- The integration of GMOs under COMBIIP is approached with careful regulation to ensure they contribute positively to improving crop yields, reducing environmental impact, and enhancing food security in Africa.

2. SDEP's Role in International Trade and Governance:

- SDEP is being considered as a **policy implementation project** for **international trade**, facilitating both **intra-African trade** and trade with external partners, particularly the **European Union (EU)**.
- The **Global Social Impact Alliance (GSIA)** is positioned as the key platform for managing policy and governance under SDEP, ensuring that projects remain compliant with **EU standards** and are ready for global markets.

3. Leveraging EU Governance Standards for Compliance:

- By adopting **EU governance frameworks**, SDEP ensures that African agricultural products meet international standards for quality, safety, and sustainability, opening the door to **global market access**.
- GSIA will implement EU-aligned policies, reducing the need for African countries to develop separate compliance systems and facilitating trade partnerships with the EU and beyond.

These updates place SDEP at the forefront of **sustainable development**, **international trade compliance**, and **agricultural innovation** in the COMESA region, aligning it with global standards and enhancing its impact on regional and global trade systems.