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# Proposal for the Expansion of ACTESA's Mandate

Submitted to the COMESA Council of Ministers

# 1. Executive Summary

For over a decade, the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) has been at the heart of COMESA's vision for regional food security and agricultural trade integration. Through policy harmonization, seed regulation reforms, and market coordination, ACTESA has worked to bridge the gap between smallholder farmers and regional markets, enhancing trade across borders and laying the groundwork for a stronger, more resilient agricultural sector.

Yet, despite these efforts, the fundamental challenges facing Africa's agricultural economy remain. Farmers struggle with poor infrastructure, post-harvest losses, and limited access to investment capital. Trade corridors are underdeveloped, leaving African commodities unable to compete on the global stage. Meanwhile, the continent's vast agricultural potential remains untapped, constrained by outdated policies, insufficient financing, and a lack of large-scale agribusiness investment.

It is clear that ACTESA's current mandate—focused on policy coordination—no longer matches the scale of Africa's ambitions. If COMESA is to establish itself as a global leader in agricultural trade, food security, and agribusiness industrialization, then ACTESA must be empowered with a new, expanded mandate that moves beyond policy facilitation and into the realm of investment mobilization, large-scale infrastructure development, and direct private sector engagement.

This proposal presents a visionary yet pragmatic solution: an updated mandate for ACTESA that aligns with the continent's economic transformation goals under Agenda 2063 and the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). This expansion will allow ACTESA to:

- Mobilize large-scale financing, including a \$300 billion structured investment proposal in collaboration with the African Development Bank (AfDB), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the World Bank, and private sector investors.
- Facilitate agribusiness industrialization, transforming COMESA from a producer of raw agricultural commodities into a hub for high-value agricultural processing and export.
- Develop modern trade corridors, logistics hubs, and smart agricultural infrastructure, ensuring
   African goods reach global markets efficiently and competitively.
- Expand ACTESA's role to include financial structuring, investment facilitation, and climatesmart agricultural innovation, unlocking Africa's full potential in a changing global economy.

A vote in favor of this proposal will position ACTESA as Africa's leading agribusiness and trade development institution, capable of driving regional and global trade integration. This is not just a bureaucratic adjustment; it is a strategic transformation—one that will generate millions of jobs, unlock billions in trade value, and ensure COMESA's agricultural economy thrives for generations to come.



# 2. Background and Rationale

#### 2.1 ACTESA's Journey and the Need for Evolution

The story of ACTESA is one of progress and promises, yet also of missed opportunities. When it was first established, ACTESA was envisioned as a driver of food security, trade facilitation, and policy harmonization within the COMESA region. And in many ways, it has succeeded.

The organization has pioneered seed harmonization policies, allowing for the movement of improved crop varieties across borders. It has developed biosafety and biotechnology frameworks, ensuring that Africa remains competitive in agricultural innovation. It has aligned fertilizer regulations, creating a foundation for higher agricultural productivity.

Yet, despite these accomplishments, Africa's agricultural sector remains vastly underdeveloped. ACTESA's mandate, as it stands today, is not enough to transform agriculture into the economic powerhouse that COMESA envisions. It has provided the regulatory framework—but not the capital, infrastructure, or industrial investment needed to move from policy to large-scale transformation.

The reality is simple: The world is changing, and ACTESA must change with it. If COMESA does not act now, Africa risks being left behind in the global agricultural economy.

#### 2.2 The Gaps in ACTESA's Current Mandate

Despite its achievements, ACTESA's current structure leaves it unable to respond to the most pressing challenges facing Africa's agricultural trade sector:

#### 1. Lack of Direct Investment and Financial Structuring Power

- o ACTESA is not empowered to mobilize or directly manage large-scale financing.
- Without financial structuring capabilities, it cannot secure the private capital, loans, and blended finance mechanisms needed for large-scale agribusiness transformation.
- The Power Play strategy requires the ability to negotiate and facilitate high-value investment deals—a function ACTESA does not currently have.

#### 2. Insufficient Private Sector Engagement

- o ACTESA currently serves as a policy coordination body rather than an investment facilitator.
- The Power Play envisions deep private sector involvement, requiring direct collaboration with agribusinesses, financial institutions, and technology firms—an area ACTESA lacks the authority to lead.

#### 3. Infrastructure Deficiencies and Trade Bottlenecks

- Agricultural trade is hindered by weak logistics networks, poor storage facilities, and inefficient processing zones—issues that ACTESA is not currently mandated to address.
- To fully integrate COMESA into AfCFTA's regional trade framework, ACTESA needs the authority to develop trade corridors and processing hubs that can support high-value agricultural exports.

#### 4. No Mechanism for Climate-Smart Agriculture and Technological Innovation

 As global food systems become increasingly digital and climate-adaptive, Africa risks falling behind.



 ACTESA lacks a framework for deploying Al-driven market intelligence, renewable energy solutions, and climate-resilient farming techniques—all essential for the future of African agriculture.

#### 5. Institutional Limitations within the COMESA Structure

- o ACTESA is not currently positioned as a commercial or investment-driven entity.
- Without an expanded mandate, it cannot issue investment bonds, manage trade finance, or facilitate structured public-private partnerships—all necessary components of the Power Play.

#### 2.3 The Urgency of Expansion: Why COMESA Must Act Now

The global agricultural trade landscape is shifting, and Africa must decide whether to lead or be left behind. While other regions invest aggressively in agribusiness transformation, food processing, and global export strategies, COMESA's member states remain stuck in outdated models of raw commodity exports and fragmented supply chains.

The expansion of ACTESA is not just an administrative decision, it is an economic imperative. With the right mandate, ACTESA can:

- 1. Leverage \$300 billion in investment capital to modernize Africa's agricultural economy.
- 2. **Create millions of new jobs** through agro-processing, technology-driven farming, and industrial expansion.
- 3. **Elevate COMESA as a global leader in agricultural trade**, integrating seamlessly into AfCFTA's long-term trade strategies.
- 4. **Secure Africa's food future**, ensuring resilience against climate change, global supply chain disruptions, and economic volatility.

This proposal is a call to action. A vote in favor of ACTESA's mandate expansion is a vote for a stronger, wealthier, and more competitive COMESA—one that no longer simply facilitates trade but actively builds the future of African agribusiness.

# 3. The ACTESA Power Play Strategy

Whereas the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) was established as a specialized agency of COMESA to facilitate agricultural trade and enhance food security through policy harmonization, it is now evident that its current mandate is no longer sufficient to address the challenges and opportunities confronting the region's agricultural economy. And whereas the global agricultural landscape has evolved to demand an integrated approach that combines trade facilitation with industrialization, private sector investment, and climate adaptation, it is imperative that ACTESA's role be expanded accordingly.

Therefore, this proposal presents a decisive, structured strategy—the ACTESA Power Play—which seeks to transform ACTESA from a trade facilitation entity into a leading institutional force for agricultural industrialization, investment mobilization, and value-chain development across the COMESA region.

#### 3.1 The Imperative for Expansion

Africa stands at a crossroads. Despite possessing 60% of the world's uncultivated arable land, the continent remains a net importer of food—a paradox that can no longer be ignored. Within the



COMESA region, the agricultural sector accounts for a substantial share of employment and economic activity, yet it lacks the infrastructure, financing, and industrialization required to harness its full economic potential. The time has come to transition from policies that merely facilitate trade to an investment-driven model that builds industries, strengthens supply chains, and positions Africa as a global leader in agricultural exports.

This transition cannot be achieved within the existing constraints of ACTESA's mandate. As it stands, ACTESA is not empowered to lead large-scale agribusiness investments, nor to mobilize the capital required for modernizing trade corridors, establishing processing hubs, and integrating technological advancements into agriculture. Without a mandate expansion, ACTESA's influence will remain limited to regulatory harmonization and small-scale trade facilitation, leaving the region vulnerable to continued economic stagnation in the agricultural sector.

Thus, in recognition of these constraints and the need for decisive action, the ACTESA Power Play Strategy proposes the following structural reforms:

#### 3.2 Core Components of the Power Play Strategy

#### 1. Institutional Evolution: From Policy Coordination to Investment Leadership

 ACTESA shall be restructured as a regional agribusiness investment and trade authority, with a direct mandate to mobilize capital, negotiate public-private partnerships (PPPs), and manage structured investment funds for agricultural development.

#### 2. Large-Scale Industrialization of Agribusiness Value Chains

 ACTESA will oversee the development of regional agro-industrial hubs, ensuring that raw commodity exports are transformed into high-value processed goods, thereby maximizing economic gains for COMESA member states.

#### 3. Infrastructure Modernization and Trade Corridor Expansion

 ACTESA shall engage with multilateral financial institutions and private investors to construct and modernize trade corridors, incorporating transport, storage, and processing infrastructure essential for agricultural export competitiveness.

#### 4. Climate-Resilient Agriculture and Technological Innovation

 The revised mandate shall grant ACTESA the authority to facilitate climate finance and technological adoption, ensuring the region remains at the forefront of sustainable, Alpowered, and precision-driven agricultural production.

#### 5. Alignment with AfCFTA and Global Trade Networks

 ACTESA shall be empowered to develop, negotiate, and implement harmonized trade frameworks that align with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) and facilitate seamless cross-border agricultural trade.

#### 3.3 Legal Basis for the Expansion

The Treaty Establishing the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA Treaty) provides for the adoption of specialized institutions to fulfil the objectives of regional integration, trade



facilitation, and economic development. Under Article 129, COMESA may establish, restructure, or expand the mandate of its institutions to ensure their continued relevance and effectiveness.

Pursuant to this authority, and in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, the proposed mandate expansion seeks to:

- 1. Align ACTESA's role with current and future economic imperatives, ensuring that its functions extend beyond policy harmonization to direct investment facilitation;
- Strengthen ACTESA's legal and financial framework, enabling it to mobilize resources, issue investment instruments, and enter contractual agreements on behalf of COMESA member states; and
- 3. Secure ACTESA's position as the central institution for agribusiness and agricultural trade within the COMESA region, fully integrated into the continental trade framework under AfCFTA.

Thus, this proposal calls upon the COMESA Council of Ministers to exercise its powers under the Treaty and formally approve the expansion of ACTESA's mandate, thereby empowering the institution to fulfill its role as Africa's premier agricultural investment and trade authority.

# 4. Financial Strategy: The \$300 Billion Investment Proposal

Whereas the agricultural sector is the backbone of COMESA's economy, its growth has been severely constrained by chronic underinvestment, inadequate financial structures, and overreliance on donor funding. And whereas the absence of large-scale financing mechanisms has perpetuated a cycle of limited production, low-value exports, and dependence on foreign agricultural imports, it is imperative that ACTESA be granted the authority to mobilize and manage financial instruments at scale.

#### 4.1 Structuring the Investment: From Aid Dependence to Capital Sovereignty

This proposal establishes a \$300 billion structured investment framework, designed to fund Africa's agricultural transformation through diversified financial instruments. The structure shall consist of:

#### 1. \$120 Billion for Agribusiness Industrialization

- Financing the establishment of regional agro-processing hubs.
- o Expansion of high-value agricultural exports and global market access.

#### 2. \$100 Billion for Infrastructure Development

- o Investment in trade corridors, logistics, and cold storage facilities.
- Expansion of rail, port, and air freight networks to reduce supply chain inefficiencies.

#### 3. \$80 Billion for Climate Resilience and Agri-Tech Innovation

- Financing renewable energy solutions for farming, including solar irrigation and bioenergy.
- Scaling up AI-driven agricultural forecasting and precision farming technologies.

#### 4.2 Legal and Financial Mechanisms for Implementation

Pursuant to the expanded mandate of ACTESA, the investment framework shall be structured through a blend of sovereign, multilateral, and private capital sources, including:



- Multilateral development banks, such as the African Development Bank (AfDB), European Investment Bank (EIB), and World Bank, providing long-term concessional financing.
- Sovereign wealth funds, securing state-backed investment in agricultural industrialization.
- Public-private partnerships (PPPs), engaging agribusiness corporations and technology firms in co-financed projects.
- Climate impact funds, supporting sustainability-driven agricultural projects with a focus on resilience and low-carbon production.

# This financing mechanism shall be legally structured under ACTESA's revised governance framework, ensuring:

- 1. Regulatory oversight in alignment with COMESA's financial protocols.
- 2. Strict fiduciary controls and risk mitigation measures to safeguard investments.
- 3. Legal capacity to negotiate and manage financial agreements, allowing ACTESA to operate as a fully empowered investment institution.

#### A Defining Moment for COMESA

The expansion of ACTESA's mandate is not merely a policy adjustment—it is a generational decision that will shape the future of Africa's agricultural economy. The Power Play Strategy, underpinned by the \$300 billion investment proposal, provides a clear, structured pathway to economic sovereignty, industrial growth, and regional trade leadership.

By approving this proposal, the COMESA Council of Ministers will not only redefine ACTESA's role but also secure Africa's place in the global agricultural economy for decades to come.

# 5. Implementation Roadmap

Whereas the expansion of ACTESA's mandate represents a strategic redefinition of COMESA's agricultural trade and industrialization framework, its implementation must be structured through a phased, systematic approach to ensure both operational efficiency and long-term sustainability. And whereas the success of this transformation depends on securing institutional approval, mobilizing financial resources, and executing large-scale projects, it is imperative that a well-defined roadmap be adopted.

Accordingly, this proposal outlines a three-phase implementation framework, ensuring that ACTESA's transition into a fully empowered agribusiness investment authority is carried out with precision, regulatory oversight, and measurable impact.

#### Phase 1: Approval and Institutional Restructuring

The first phase shall establish the legal and operational foundation for ACTESA's expanded mandate, ensuring that all necessary approvals are secured and governance structures are realigned to reflect its new responsibilities. This phase shall include:

#### 1. Formal Approval by the COMESA Council of Ministers

 Adoption of a mandate expansion resolution, granting ACTESA the authority to facilitate agribusiness industrialization, trade corridor development, and structured investment mobilization.



o Amendment of ACTESA's operational charter to align with its new role as an investment-driven institution.

#### 2. Institutional and Governance Restructuring

- Establishment of a Specialized Investment and Trade Facilitation Unit within ACTESA, tasked with overseeing the \$300 billion financing strategy.
- o Recruitment of sectoral experts in finance, agribusiness, and infrastructure development to support the expanded functions.
- o Integration of climate finance and technology partnerships within ACTESA's new operational framework.

#### 3. Legal and Regulatory Alignment

- o Harmonization of ACTESA's expanded role with existing COMESA trade and investment policies, ensuring regulatory compliance.
- Coordination with AfCFTA governing bodies to align ACTESA's activities with Africawide trade integration objectives.

### Phase 2: Resource Mobilization and Strategic Partnerships

Following the legal and institutional restructuring, ACTESA shall enter the financial and operational deployment phase, securing investment capital and establishing key partnerships to ensure the immediate activation of priority projects.

#### 1. Engagement with Multilateral and Private Sector Investors

- Formal negotiations with the African Development Bank (AfDB), the European Investment Bank (EIB), the World Bank, and sovereign wealth funds to structure capital inflows.
- Establishment of public-private partnership (PPP) frameworks, enabling private agribusiness corporations, logistics firms, and technology companies to co-finance industrialization efforts.

#### 2. Structuring and Deployment of the \$300 Billion Investment Framework

- o Allocation of funds across agribusiness industrialization, infrastructure, and climate resilience projects, ensuring financial sustainability.
- Establishment of ACTESA Investment Bonds, allowing institutional investors to participate in regional agricultural transformation.

#### 3. Commencement of Priority Agribusiness and Infrastructure Projects

- Development of the first regional agro-processing hubs, strategically located to maximize trade efficiencies.
- o Implementation of trade corridor modernization initiatives, integrating transport, storage, and digital logistics solutions.
- o Pilot deployment of Al-driven agricultural market intelligence platforms, ensuring real-time trade optimization.



#### Phase 3: Full-Scale Implementation and Scaling

With investment secured and priority projects initiated, ACTESA shall transition to full-scale implementation, ensuring the expansion of industrialization, trade facilitation, and agribusiness development across all member states.

#### 1. Nationwide and Regional Expansion of Agribusiness Hubs

- Scaling up of agricultural processing zones, ensuring that each COMESA member state benefits from localized value-chain development.
- o Expansion of export-oriented agribusiness sectors, targeting high-value global markets.

#### 2. Operationalization of ACTESA as a Self-Sustaining Investment Institution

- Establishment of long-term revenue generation models, ensuring that ACTESA operates as a financially independent entity.
- Continuous adaptation of investment strategies, allowing ACTESA to reinvest in new agribusiness and trade opportunities.

#### 3. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Policy Refinement

- Deployment of a Central Oversight Mechanism, ensuring that all investments adhere to transparency, efficiency, and regulatory compliance.
- Adaptive policy revisions based on market performance, ensuring that ACTESA remains a flexible and responsive institution.

#### 6. Governance and Institutional Framework

Whereas ACTESA's transformation necessitates a redefined governance model to support its expanded functions, it is imperative that the institution be restructured in accordance with best practices in investment management, trade facilitation, and financial oversight. And whereas ensuring transparency, efficiency, and investor confidence is paramount, this proposal sets forth a governance framework that ensures ACTESA operates with the highest standards of fiduciary responsibility and institutional integrity.

Accordingly, the revised governance framework shall include:

#### 6.1 Proposed Organizational Structure for the Expanded ACTESA

### 1. Establishment of the ACTESA Investment and Trade Authority (AITA)

- A newly structured high-level governing body within ACTESA, responsible for overseeing investment management, trade development, and financial structuring.
- o Comprised of representatives from COMESA member states, financial institutions, and private sector partners, ensuring a multi-stakeholder approach to decision-making.

#### 2. Creation of the ACTESA Investment and Industrialization Fund (AIIF)

 A dedicated financial management unit responsible for the allocation, deployment, and oversight of structured investment capital within the expanded ACTESA framework.



 Operating under strict fiduciary controls, risk management policies, and investment performance metrics, ensuring accountability.

#### 3. Specialized Sectoral Committees

 Establishment of Technical Committees focused on agribusiness, infrastructure, climate adaptation, and trade logistics, ensuring that ACTESA's investments remain sector-specific and impact-driven.

#### 6.2 Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Model

Recognizing that private sector engagement is critical to the success of agribusiness industrialization and regional trade development, ACTESA's governance structure shall include a dedicated Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Advisory Board, responsible for:

- 1. Facilitating private sector investments in agro-processing, logistics, and digital trade solutions.
- 2. Developing legal frameworks for investment protection, ensuring that private investors operate within a secure, stable regulatory environment.
- 3. Structuring long-term concession agreements, allowing private entities to co-develop infrastructure while maintaining regulatory oversight by ACTESA.

#### 6.3 Compliance and Risk Management

Given the **magnitude of the \$300 billion investment framework**, strict compliance, risk management, and transparency mechanisms shall be institutionalized, including:

#### 1. Regulatory Oversight and Governance Alignment

- ACTESA's expanded investment activities shall be fully aligned with COMESA's financial governance policies, ensuring adherence to international best practices.
- Establishment of an independent compliance and audit division, responsible for overseeing all financial transactions and investment agreements.

#### 2. Fiduciary Controls and Investment Risk Mitigation

- o Adoption of risk management frameworks, including credit assessment models, geopolitical risk analysis, and market volatility safeguards.
- Structuring of contingency funds, ensuring that investment capital is protected against unforeseen economic fluctuations.

#### 3. Transparency and Stakeholder Accountability

- o Implementation of quarterly financial reporting and annual investment reviews, ensuring that all stakeholders remain informed of progress and financial health.
- Regular policy consultations with COMESA member states, financial partners, and agribusiness investors, ensuring that ACTESA's direction remains aligned with regional development objectives.

#### Conclusion: Strengthening the Future of COMESA Through Institutional Excellence

The success of ACTESA's expanded mandate, the Power Play Strategy, and the \$300 billion investment framework depends on a strong institutional foundation, financial transparency, and a well-structured implementation strategy. By adopting the governance and oversight mechanisms outlined in this



proposal, COMESA ensures that ACTESA evolves into a world-class investment authority, capable of leading Africa's agricultural transformation.

Accordingly, this proposal calls upon the COMESA Council of Ministers to formally adopt the expanded governance framework, thereby securing the institutional integrity, financial security, and strategic efficiency required for ACTESA to fulfill its new role.

#### 7. Conclusion and Call to Action

Whereas the expansion of ACTESA's mandate represents not merely an administrative adjustment, but a defining moment for the future of COMESA's agricultural economy, it is incumbent upon this Council to recognize the urgency of the matter before it. And whereas the failure to act decisively will leave COMESA vulnerable to continued economic underperformance, reliance on food imports, and stagnation in trade competitiveness, it is imperative that this Council seize the opportunity to enact a bold, transformative decision. Accordingly, this proposal represents an opportunity to:

- Position COMESA as a Global Agribusiness Powerhouse
  - With ACTESA's expanded mandate, COMESA will transition from a regional trade facilitator to a leading force in global agricultural exports, securing a place for African products in high-value international markets.
- Create Millions of Jobs and Drive Economic Growth
  - The industrialization of agribusiness, modernization of trade corridors, and development of agro-processing hubs will generate millions of new jobs, expand value chains, and drive rural economic development, ensuring widespread prosperity across member states.
- Secure Africa's Food Sovereignty and Climate Resilience
  By integrating climate-smart agriculture, renewable energy solutions, and Al-driven
  agribusiness innovations, COMESA will establish itself as a leader in sustainable and selfsufficient food production, mitigating the risks of climate change and global supply chain
  disruptions.
- Unlock \$300 Billion in Investment for Africa's Agricultural Transformation

  Through structured financial instruments, public-private partnerships, and multilateral funding mechanisms, ACTESA will serve as the gateway for large-scale, long-term investment into African agribusiness, ensuring sustained growth and financial independence.

#### 7.1 Why This Vote is Critical for COMESA's Future

This proposal is not merely an opportunity—it is a responsibility. The decisions made by this Council will shape the economic trajectory of the region for decades to come. To delay action is to forfeit Africa's rightful place as a global leader in agricultural trade and investment. The time for incremental change has passed. The time for decisive leadership is now. By voting in favor of this proposal, the COMESA Council of Ministers will:

- Empower ACTESA with the legal, financial, and institutional framework necessary to mobilize investment and implement large-scale agribusiness initiatives.
- Ensure that Africa no longer remains a raw commodity exporter, but instead builds the
  industries, logistics networks, and financial mechanisms required to fully capitalize on its
  agricultural potential.
- Provide a clear and strategic pathway for the implementation of AfCFTA in agriculture, positioning COMESA as the leading driver of regional trade integration.



A vote against this proposal is not a vote for continuity—it is a vote for stagnation, for missed opportunities, and for the continued marginalization of Africa in the global trade system.

#### 7.2 Next Steps for Adoption and Approval

Accordingly, this Council is urged to take the following actions without delay:

#### 1. Formal Adoption of the ACTESA Mandate Expansion Resolution

 A resolution shall be passed by the COMESA Council of Ministers approving the expansion of ACTESA's mandate to include investment facilitation, agribusiness industrialization, infrastructure development, and structured financing.

#### 2. Immediate Establishment of the ACTESA Investment and Trade Authority (AITA)

 Upon mandate approval, the ACTESA Investment and Trade Authority (AITA) shall be formally established within ACTESA's governance framework to oversee the execution of the Power Play Strategy and the \$300 billion investment mobilization plan.

#### 3. Commencement of High-Level Engagements with Financial Institutions and Investors

 COMESA, through ACTESA, shall immediately initiate negotiations with the African Development Bank (AfDB), European Investment Bank (EIB), World Bank, sovereign wealth funds, and leading private sector investors, securing the first phase of funding for infrastructure and agribusiness development.

#### 4. Legislative Alignment and Implementation Roadmap Development

- Member states shall align their national policies and legal frameworks with ACTESA's expanded role to ensure seamless implementation and regulatory consistency.
- A detailed implementation roadmap shall be developed, setting forth clear milestones, project timelines, and investment deployment schedules for the next decade.

#### 5. Public and Private Sector Mobilization

- COMESA shall engage private sector leaders, financial institutions, and development partners, ensuring that all stakeholders are aligned with the long-term vision of ACTESA's transformation.
- o An annual ACTESA Investment and Trade Summit shall be established, creating a platform for high-level negotiations, trade agreements, and financing commitments.

#### A Moment of Leadership: The Time to Act is Now

This Council is at a historic crossroads. What we decide today will define the trajectory of COMESA's agricultural economy for generations to come.

The global economy will not wait for Africa to act. International markets are evolving, trade patterns are shifting, and investment flows are being redirected toward regions that demonstrate leadership, vision, and strategic direction.

COMESA has the resources, the expertise, and the opportunity to take its place at the forefront of agricultural industrialization and trade. But without bold, decisive action, the window of opportunity will close, and COMESA will be left behind in a rapidly changing global economic order.

This proposal is not simply about ACTESA—it is about Africa's future. It is about securing our place in the global economy, ensuring prosperity for our people, and ending the cycle of dependency that has held our continent back for too long.



The question before this Council is not whether Africa has the potential to lead—it is whether we have the will to act.

Let history record that when Africa's moment came, we chose leadership over hesitation, progress over delay, and bold action over indecision.

Accordingly, the COMESA Council of Ministers is urged to pass this resolution, expand ACTESA's mandate, and usher in a new era of prosperity, self-sufficiency, and global leadership for the COMESA region.

# 8. Political and Diplomatic Considerations

Whereas the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) provides a structured framework for regional economic cooperation, it is also characterized by bureaucratic complexities, procedural inertia, and prolonged decision-making processes. And whereas the success of ACTESA's expanded mandate requires not only legal approval but also political commitment from member states, it is imperative to ensure that this proposal is both strategically positioned and diplomatically reinforced.

Accordingly, this proposal recognizes that COMESA's decision-making structures alone are insufficient to guarantee swift and effective adoption of the ACTESA Power Play. As such, a parallel diplomatic and financial engagement strategy is necessary to accelerate implementation, secure member state commitments, and position the initiative within a broader continental development framework.

#### 8.1 Overcoming Bureaucratic Barriers Through Institutional Leverage

Rather than relying solely on COMESA's internal approval mechanisms, this proposal introduces a proactive external engagement strategy centered around the African Development Bank (AfDB) and its structured investment approach. Specifically, the following measures will be undertaken:

#### 1. Member State Letter of Intent for SDEP Participation

- The AfDB shall formally request that individual COMESA member states submit Letters of Intent to participate in the Social Development and Empowering Programme (SDEP).
- This approach circumvents bureaucratic stagnation by establishing direct financial commitments from national governments rather than awaiting consensus through COMESA's administrative channels.

#### 2. ACTESA Power Play as the Natural Extension of SDEP

- Once SDEP is operational, the ACTESA Power Play will be positioned as the logical next phase, transitioning from targeted interventions to a continent-wide structured investment framework.
- This strategy ensures that member states are already financially and institutionally engaged before the Power Play reaches its full implementation stage, reducing resistance and accelerating approval.

#### 3. Integration into AfDB's Regional Expansion Strategy

 The African Development Bank has already expressed interest in expanding SDEP's model beyond COMESA and into the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and other Regional Economic Communities (RECs).



 By aligning with AfDB's broader continental investment strategy, ACTESA will be positioned not as an isolated initiative but as part of a pan-African transformation movement, making political buy-in significantly easier.

#### 8.2 Diplomatic Engagement with COMESA, AfCFTA, and Regional Power Brokers

In addition to securing member state commitments through AfDB, this proposal calls for targeted diplomatic engagement with key stakeholders who hold influence over regional economic policy. This shall include:

#### 1. Bilateral Consultations with Leading COMESA Member States

- Given the precedent of leadership-driven decision-making within COMESA, a pre-vote engagement strategy shall be implemented, securing early endorsements from the region's most influential economies.
- By engaging proactively with key member states before the formal vote, the likelihood of securing a swift and favorable outcome will be significantly enhanced.

#### 2. Alignment with the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

- The ACTESA Power Play will be framed as a critical enabler of AfCFTA's agricultural trade objectives, reinforcing Africa's ambition to establish a continent-wide integrated agricultural market.
- By securing AfCFTA's endorsement, ACTESA's role will be recognized not just within COMESA but across all African economic zones, ensuring continent-wide policy alignment.

#### 3. Engagement with the African Union Commission (AUC)

- The African Union's Department of Economic Development, Trade, and Industry (ETIM) shall be formally engaged to position ACTESA's expansion within the AU's Agenda 2063 framework.
- o This step will ensure that ACTESA's activities align with Africa's broader development goals, strengthening its legitimacy and attracting additional funding partners.

#### 8.3 A Continental Strategy for Scaling Beyond COMESA

Beyond COMESA, the ACTESA Power Play represents a model for regional agribusiness investment and trade facilitation that can be replicated across Africa's other RECs. Recognizing this, the following measures shall be implemented:

#### 1. Formal Invitations to SADC, ECOWAS, and EAC for Cross-Regional Collaboration

- o As part of AfDB's push for broader regional adoption, ACTESA's framework shall be presented to other RECs as a scalable solution for agribusiness investment.
- This will create opportunities for cross-regional agricultural value chains, increasing Africa's global competitiveness.

#### 2. Institutional Positioning for Future Expansion

 By structuring ACTESA's expanded mandate as a replicable investment model, it can serve as the template for agribusiness industrialization efforts in West, Central, and North Africa.



• This ensures that ACTESA is not just a COMESA institution but a continental leader in agricultural trade transformation.

#### Conclusion: A Strategic, Multi-Layered Political Approach

This proposal acknowledges the limitations of COMESA's bureaucratic processes and proactively circumvents potential delays by leveraging AfDB's financial authority, securing early member state commitments, and aligning with AfCFTA's trade vision.

By framing ACTESA's transformation not as an isolated regional initiative, but as part of a pan-African movement for agricultural investment and trade, this strategy ensures that:

- Member states commit to participation early, avoiding bureaucratic delays.
- AfDB and AfCFTA serve as accelerators, positioning ACTESA within a larger continental framework.
- COMESA's role is reinforced as the leading force in Africa's agricultural trade transformation.

Accordingly, this proposal calls upon the COMESA Council of Ministers to recognize the strategic imperative of ACTESA's mandate expansion and to proceed with the necessary legislative approvals to secure its full implementation.

# 9. Risk Assessment and Mitigation Strategy

Whereas the ACTESA Power Play represents an unprecedented investment and trade facilitation initiative, it is essential to recognize and proactively address the inherent financial, operational, and geopolitical risks associated with such a large-scale transformation. And whereas the successful execution of this strategy depends on the establishment of a robust governance, financial oversight, and risk management framework, this proposal outlines the safeguards that will ensure its long-term stability and resilience.

Accordingly, this section details a multi-tiered risk mitigation strategy, ensuring that the ACTESA Power Play is financially sustainable, operationally efficient, and geopolitically resilient while delivering tangible returns to COMESA member states and investors.

#### 9.1 Financial Risk Mitigation: Ensuring Investment Security and Accountability

The \$300 billion investment framework represents a long-term financial commitment that must be safeguarded against risks of misallocation, inefficiencies, and market volatility. To ensure the security and responsible deployment of funds, the following measures shall be implemented:

#### 1. Oversight and Result-Based Agreements (RBAP) with EUSL and AfDB

- The European Social Label (EUSL) shall assume full management responsibility for investment deployment under a Result-Based Agreements and Projects (RBAP) framework.
- This structure ensures that funding disbursements are performance-driven, with capital released only upon meeting clearly defined project milestones.
- The African Development Bank (AfDB) shall serve as the primary oversight body, ensuring compliance with international financial standards and regulatory benchmarks.



#### 2. Investment Fund Structuring: Bond-Based Financing Mechanisms

- To ensure liquidity, risk diversification, and investor confidence, all funds shall be placed within a bond-based investment structure, either:
  - 1. Directly under AfDB-backed financial instruments, ensuring AAA-rated security, or
  - 2. Through an independent EUSL-managed fund, designed to optimize returns while maintaining investor protections.
- This structured financing mechanism eliminates risks associated with direct cash disbursements, ensuring that funds remain secure until released for project execution.

#### 3. Controlled Disbursement Model: COMESA as the Requesting Party

- To prevent financial mismanagement or unregulated expenditures, COMESA shall not receive direct control over the investment funds.
- Instead, COMESA member states shall submit project requests, triggering a structured fund release mechanism, wherein:
  - 1. COMESA submits an official request for project execution.
  - 2. EUSL approves and releases funds directly to COMESA for the specific project.
  - 3. COMESA contracts EUSL for project execution, ensuring that both project implementation and financial oversight remain within the same structured framework.

This model effectively positions ACTESA as both the provider of projects and the financial framework for investors, ensuring seamless execution and accountability.

#### 9.2 Operational Risk Mitigation: Ensuring Efficient Project Execution

Given the historical challenges associated with large-scale development projects in Africa, the ACTESA Power Play introduces a fully integrated operational oversight model, ensuring that:

- Funds are deployed only to projects with pre-approved feasibility assessments.
- Execution remains in the hands of expert-led implementation teams under EUSL.
- AfDB and external auditors provide regular assessments to ensure compliance.

To prevent bureaucratic bottlenecks, inefficiencies, or political interference, the following measures shall be adopted:

#### 1. Centralized Project Management Under EUSL

- Rather than dispersing responsibility across multiple entities, EUSL shall serve as the single point of accountability for all Power Play-related projects.
- This ensures efficiency, transparency, and streamlined decision-making, reducing administrative delays and regulatory inconsistencies.

#### 2. Multi-Layered Compliance Mechanisms

• To eliminate the risk of corruption, mismanagement, or resource diversion, the following compliance frameworks shall be enforced:



- o External auditing and performance tracking through AfDB.
- o Independent compliance committees composed of legal, financial, and trade experts.
- o Digital tracking of fund flows, ensuring complete transparency in project financing.

#### 3. Private Sector Engagement to Drive Efficiency

- Unlike traditional state-run infrastructure projects, the ACTESA Power Play shall integrate private-sector-driven implementation models, ensuring:
  - o Time-bound delivery of projects under enforceable contracts.
  - Cost-efficiency and risk-sharing with private investors.
  - Commercially viable projects that generate long-term revenues.

#### 9.3 Geopolitical and Market Risk Mitigation: Securing Long-Term Stability

The ACTESA Power Play operates within a highly dynamic geopolitical and economic environment, requiring safeguards against external risks such as:

- Currency fluctuations and global trade disruptions.
- Political instability within member states.
- Macroeconomic shocks impacting investment flows.

To mitigate these risks, the following measures shall be implemented:

#### 1. Currency and Trade Risk Hedging Strategies

- Given the multi-currency nature of the investment, all financing shall be structured in:
  - o USD and EUR-denominated instruments to mitigate currency devaluation risks.
  - o Hedging mechanisms that protect against exchange rate volatility.
- Multi-market export strategies shall be deployed to ensure African agribusiness remains competitive even in fluctuating global trade conditions.

#### 2. Political Risk Insurance and Regulatory Safeguards

- All investment commitments shall be backed by international political risk insurance, ensuring protection against:
  - o Government expropriation or policy reversals.
  - o Regulatory changes impacting investment returns.
  - Political instability within individual member states.
- Long-term regulatory agreements shall be negotiated with COMESA governments, ensuring a stable policy environment for investors.

#### 3. Crisis Response Mechanism

- A dedicated risk assessment unit shall be established within ACTESA, responsible for:
  - o Tracking global market trends and assessing potential risks.



- o Implementing contingency plans in response to economic downturns or geopolitical disruptions.
- Adjusting investment allocation strategies based on real-time data.

# A Financially Secure, Operationally Efficient, and Risk-Resilient Framework This proposal ensures that the ACTESA Power Play is:

- Financially Secure Through AfDB-backed bonds, EUSL fund management, and controlled disbursements that eliminate misallocation risks.
- Operationally Efficient Through centralized project execution under EUSL, eliminating bureaucratic inefficiencies and ensuring results-driven implementation.
- Geopolitically and Economically Resilient Through hedging strategies, political risk insurance, and macroeconomic safeguards that protect investor confidence and long-term stability.

By implementing this structured financial and risk mitigation strategy, the ACTESA Power Play is not merely an ambitious vision but a fully secured, strategically designed investment framework that will deliver long-term, transformative impact for COMESA and beyond.

Accordingly, this proposal calls upon the COMESA Council of Ministers to formally approve the ACTESA Power Play's financial and operational framework, ensuring that it remains a secure, efficient, and investor-attractive initiative.

# 10. Legal Transition and Compliance Framework

Whereas the expansion of ACTESA's mandate constitutes a structural reform within COMESA, its legal adoption must adhere to established decision-making protocols, ensuring legitimacy, enforceability, and clear compliance mechanisms. And whereas the varying interests of COMESA member states may result in differing levels of participation, it is imperative that this framework allows for both flexibility and enforceability, ensuring that those who opt in gain the full benefits while those who abstain remain unaffected.

Accordingly, this section provides a structured legal transition plan, defining the timeline for adoption, the decision-making threshold required, and the legal framework for voluntary and mandatory participation in the expanded ACTESA mandate.

#### 10.1 Decision-Making Authority and Voting Requirements

Under the COMESA Treaty and its institutional decision-making structures, amendments to the mandate of a specialized agency such as ACTESA typically require:

- A simple majority vote for procedural and operational adjustments.
- A two-thirds majority vote for structural mandate changes.
- Unanimous consent only when treaty amendments or sovereignty-related provisions are affected.

Given that the ACTESA Power Play represents a structural expansion rather than a treaty amendment, it is anticipated that a two-thirds majority vote shall be sufficient for formal adoption. However, a final legal determination shall be sought from the COMESA Secretariat's Legal Affairs Division to confirm the specific voting threshold required.



#### **\*** Key Legal Principle:

• If a two-thirds majority is reached, the mandate expansion will be considered formally approved and binding for participating states, with non-participating states retaining their current level of engagement under ACTESA's existing framework.

#### 10.2 Optional Participation: A Flexible Mandate Expansion Model

To ensure that no member state is compelled to adopt the expanded mandate against its interests, this proposal establishes an "Opt-In Model", wherein:

- Participation in the expanded ACTESA framework is voluntary—member states that vote in favor gain access to the full benefits, while those that abstain or vote against retain their current status.
- Non-participating states neither lose existing ACTESA services nor gain access to the expanded investment opportunities and financial structuring mechanisms.
- Future accession remains available—member states that initially opt out may formally request entry at a later stage without requiring a new Council vote.

# Legal Precedent:

This approach mirrors previous COMESA protocols on sectoral cooperation, where specific
economic or trade agreements apply only to participating states without imposing obligations
on non-participants.

#### 10.3 Legal and Institutional Integration Timeline

The legal transition process shall be executed in phases, ensuring a smooth and orderly adoption process:

#### Phase 1: Formal Council Vote (Within 90 Days of Proposal Submission)

- The COMESA Council of Ministers shall deliberate and cast votes on the ACTESA Mandate Expansion Resolution.
- If two-thirds approval is secured, the resolution shall be formally adopted, and participating states shall commence legal integration.

#### Phase 2: National Legal Integration (6-12 Months Post-Approval)

- Participating member states shall incorporate ACTESA's expanded mandate into their national policy and legal frameworks, ensuring legal consistency.
- ACTESA shall provide technical and legal support to facilitate national-level integration.

#### Phase 3: Full Operationalization (12-24 Months Post-Approval)

- ACTESA's expanded functions shall be fully operational, with investment frameworks, trade corridors, and industrialization projects in execution.
- Non-participating states remain under ACTESA's existing structure but retain the right to opt in at a later stage.



#### 10.4 Enforcement and Compliance Mechanisms

Given the voluntary nature of the expanded mandate, there shall be no punitive measures for non-participating states. However, to maintain integrity and prevent potential disruptions, the following legal safeguards shall be implemented:

- Formal Accession Agreements Participating states shall enter into a legally binding Accession Agreement, confirming their commitment to the expanded ACTESA framework.
- Investment Exclusivity for Participating States Only participating states shall have access to the \$300 billion investment framework, ensuring that non-participating states do not benefit indirectly from an initiative they did not support.
- Legal Certainty for Private Investors Investor agreements shall be structured only with participating states, ensuring that financial commitments remain protected from policy reversals by non-adopting governments.

# **\*** Key Legal Safeguard:

 Once a state opts in, it is legally bound to honor all investment agreements and trade facilitation measures under the expanded ACTESA framework, ensuring policy stability and investor confidence.

#### 10.5 Long-Term Legal and Institutional Adaptation

To ensure that the ACTESA Power Play remains legally adaptable and institutionally resilient, a Legal Review Committee shall be established, responsible for:

- Periodic legal reviews to assess the effectiveness of the expanded mandate.
- Recommending adjustments to ensure compliance with evolving regional and global trade regulations.
- Facilitating future legal integration should additional member states choose to join postadoption.

# Future Adaptability Clause:

 A review mechanism shall be embedded in the resolution, allowing for periodic adjustments to accommodate new legal, financial, and trade developments without requiring a complete reapproval process.

#### A Legally Sound, Flexible, and Scalable Framework

This proposal ensures that:

- Participation remains optional, eliminating concerns of forced compliance.
- The legal transition is structured and time-bound, ensuring a smooth integration process.
- The mandate expansion is enforceable, providing investment security and institutional stability.
- **Future expansion remains possible**, allowing non-participating states to opt in at their own pace.

Accordingly, this proposal calls upon the COMESA Council of Ministers to formally adopt the Legal Transition and Compliance Framework, ensuring a structured, voluntary, and legally secure expansion of ACTESA's mandate.



# 11. Open Considerations for Member State Input and Private Sector Engagement

Whereas the expansion of ACTESA's mandate represents a structural shift in COMESA's approach to agribusiness, investment facilitation, and trade development, it is essential that the process remains inclusive, transparent, and adaptable to the needs of all stakeholders. And whereas certain member states may express initial reservations regarding the operational structure, governance model, or financial mechanisms of the expanded mandate, this proposal provides a framework for ongoing discussion, negotiation, and refinement.

Accordingly, this section outlines key areas left open for deliberation, ensuring that member states, private sector actors, and institutional partners have an active role in shaping the final governance and operational model of the ACTESA Power Play.

#### 11.1 Member State Input on the Scope of the Expanded Mandate

While the foundational principles of the ACTESA Power Play are firmly established—focusing on agribusiness industrialization, investment mobilization, and infrastructure development—certain elements of the operational framework remain open for discussion, including:

#### **Level of National Autonomy in Project Selection**

- Should participating member states retain full autonomy in selecting and managing projects within their territories, or should ACTESA coordinate projects at the regional level?
- Would a hybrid approach—where ACTESA provides investment and technical assistance while national governments retain administrative oversight—be preferable?

#### Role of COMESA vs. National Governments in Investment Approval

- Should ACTESA function as the centralized investment facilitator, or should project financing be distributed through national development agencies?
- What mechanisms should be in place to ensure equal access to funding for all participating states?

#### **Potential Policy Safeguards for Non-Participating States**

- Should additional guarantees be provided to ensure that non-participating states retain observer status and the right to opt in at a later stage without financial or political penalties?
- How can non-participating states engage with the framework without committing to full financial participation?

#### Open Deliberation Clause:

 A Member State Consultation Process shall be established to ensure that all governments whether supportive or skeptical—can actively participate in defining the operational structure of the expanded ACTESA framework.

#### 11.2 Private Sector Participation in Governance and Decision-Making

Given the central role of private investment in financing agribusiness transformation, it is critical to determine:



#### The Extent of Private Sector Representation in ACTESA's Governance Model

- Should private sector investors have formal seats on the ACTESA Investment and Trade Authority (AITA), or should their role remain advisory in nature?
- Would a multi-tiered governance model, where private sector actors contribute through sectoral advisory councils, provide the best balance between public control and market-driven efficiency?

#### **Investor Protections and Market Access Regulations**

- What regulatory mechanisms should be implemented to prevent market monopolization while ensuring that private capital remains protected against political risks?
- How should foreign direct investment (FDI) be managed to ensure local participation and equitable wealth distribution?

#### **Balancing Public-Private Interests in Investment Decision-Making**

- Should government-led approvals be required for all major private investments, or should ACTESA retain full decision-making authority within an agreed investment framework?
- Would a PPP arbitration mechanism be beneficial in resolving potential disputes between governments and private investors?

#### Open Deliberation Clause:

 A Private Sector Engagement Forum shall be established to ensure that investors, agribusiness leaders, and financial institutions play an active role in shaping the governance and investment security policies of the expanded ACTESA framework.

#### 11.3 Institutional Positioning and Regional Integration Considerations

Given that the ACTESA Power Play is designed to align with continental trade frameworks, such as AfCFTA and AU Agenda 2063, certain institutional positioning elements remain open for further alignment discussions, including:

#### Formal Integration with AfCFTA's Agricultural Trade Policies

- Should ACTESA become the official COMESA institution for AfCFTA agribusiness development, or should its role remain advisory?
- Would an inter-REC agricultural trade council facilitate greater policy coordination across COMESA, SADC, EAC, and ECOWAS?

#### **Expansion Beyond COMESA Member States**

- If SADC, EAC, or ECOWAS express interest in adopting elements of the Power Play, should ACTESA be rebranded as a pan-African agribusiness entity, or should it remain COMESAexclusive?
- Would a multi-REC governance framework ensure broader political buy-in for large-scale agribusiness investments?



#### **Harmonization of Agricultural Investment Laws Across COMESA**

- Should ACTESA be empowered to draft and implement a COMESA-wide agribusiness investment code, ensuring uniformity across all participating states?
- Would individual states prefer to retain independent regulatory control over agribusiness investments within their jurisdictions?

#### Open Deliberation Clause:

 A Regional Integration Working Group shall be established to ensure that ACTESA's expansion aligns with broader continental trade and investment objectives while respecting the sovereignty of individual RECs.

#### Conclusion: A Collaborative Approach to Structuring ACTESA's Future

This proposal recognizes that while the core objectives of the ACTESA Power Play are clear, certain institutional, financial, and governance considerations must remain open for dialogue and refinement.

By incorporating structured engagement mechanisms, including:

- A Member State Consultation Process to ensure equitable national participation.
- A Private Sector Engagement Forum to integrate investor perspectives into the governance model.
- A Regional Integration Working Group to align ACTESA's expansion with AfCFTA and AU objectives.

This framework ensures that the final structure of the expanded ACTESA mandate is shaped through a collective, consensus-driven process, allowing sceptical states to actively define their level of participation rather than being presented with a rigid, pre-determined structure.

Accordingly, this proposal calls upon the COMESA Council of Ministers to endorse this collaborative deliberation process, ensuring that the final ACTESA governance framework reflects the shared interests of all stakeholders.

# 12. Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Whereas the ACTESA Power Play represents one of the most significant economic transformations in the history of COMESA, its success is contingent not only on legal approvals and financial structuring but also on public perception, investor confidence, and strategic messaging. And whereas a failure to communicate the vision, impact, and benefits of the expanded mandate could lead to misunderstanding, resistance, or political hesitation, it is imperative that a comprehensive communication strategy be deployed.

Accordingly, this section outlines a multi-tiered stakeholder engagement plan, ensuring that the ACTESA Power Play is effectively communicated to governments, investors, the private sector, and the general public, securing the broad-based support required for long-term success.

#### 12.1 Strategic Objectives of the Communication Plan

The primary goal of the Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Plan is to ensure that all key actors:



- Understand the objectives of the ACTESA Power Play and the \$300 billion investment framework.
- Recognize the benefits of participation and the opportunities for economic transformation.
- Are mobilized to actively support and champion the expanded mandate at national, regional, and global levels.

#### This shall be achieved through:

- A High-Level Political and Diplomatic Messaging Strategy Ensuring that government officials, policymakers, and institutional stakeholders clearly understand the strategic value of the Power Play.
- 2. **An Investment and Private Sector Engagement Plan** Positioning ACTESA as a premier investment destination, attracting agribusiness capital and trade facilitation partnerships.
- 3. A Public Awareness and Media Strategy Educating citizens, farmers, and business communities on how the ACTESA expansion will directly benefit them in terms of jobs, market access, and food security.

#### 12.2 High-Level Political and Diplomatic Messaging Strategy

**Objective:** Secure official endorsements and policy alignment across COMESA, AfCFTA, and the African Union (AU).

# **\*** Target Audiences:

- COMESA Heads of State and Ministers of Trade, Agriculture, and Finance.
- AfCFTA Secretariat and AU Economic Development Commission.
- Multilateral institutions (AfDB, World Bank, EIB, WTO, UNECA).

# Key Messaging:

- **Economic Sovereignty:** "The ACTESA Power Play is Africa's pathway to self-sufficiency in agribusiness, reducing reliance on food imports."
- **Continental Leadership:** "By expanding ACTESA's role, COMESA is positioning itself as the leader in Africa's agricultural trade transformation."
- Investment-Driven Growth: "This initiative is fully funded, requiring no additional budget from COMESA states, while delivering billions in economic benefits."

#### **P** Communication Channels:

- High-level ministerial briefings and official communiqués.
- Diplomatic summits and formal integration into AU and AfCFTA policy discussions.
- Closed-door strategic negotiations with key government allies before the final vote.



#### 12.3 Investment and Private Sector Engagement Plan

**Objective:** Build confidence among **investors**, **agribusiness leaders**, **and development finance institutions**, ensuring their participation in the Power Play.

# Target Audiences:

- Sovereign wealth funds, private equity firms, and multinational agribusiness corporations.
- Financial institutions (AfDB, World Bank, IFC, African Sovereign Wealth Network).
- Technology and logistics firms investing in agritech, AI, and infrastructure development.

# ★ Key Messaging:

- **Secure Returns on Investment:** "ACTESA's structured financing model ensures predictable returns backed by AfDB and private sector guarantees."
- **Regulatory Stability:** "The Power Play establishes long-term investment protections, shielding investors from political risks."
- Market Expansion: "With AfCFTA integration, ACTESA creates a single, unified African agribusiness market with seamless trade corridors."

## **\*** Communication Channels:

- Exclusive investor roundtables and private-sector advisory forums.
- A dedicated 'ACTESA Investment Portal' providing real-time project updates and financial insights.
- Global roadshows and presentations at key financial summits (WEF, AfDB Annual Meetings, UN Economic Forum).

#### 12.4 Public Awareness and Media Strategy

**Objective:** Ensure broad public support by educating farmers, SMEs, workers, and the general public about the tangible benefits of the ACTESA expansion.

#### Target Audiences:

- Farmers and agribusiness cooperatives in COMESA member states.
- Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) seeking regional trade opportunities.
- General public, labor organizations, and youth employment groups.

# **★** Key Messaging:

- **Job Creation:** "The Power Play will create millions of new jobs in agribusiness, logistics, and processing industries."
- **Improved Market Access:** "Farmers and SMEs will gain direct entry into high-value markets, eliminating trade barriers."
- Food Security and Price Stability: "Increased agricultural investment will reduce food shortages and ensure affordable prices for staple goods."



#### **\*** Communication Channels:

- Regional radio and television campaigns, featuring real-world success stories of farmers and agribusinesses.
- Social media outreach via ACTESA's digital platforms, ensuring direct engagement with youth and SMEs.
- Partnerships with universities, trade unions, and community organizations to disseminate informational materials.

#### 12.5 Crisis Communication and Risk Management

Recognizing that any large-scale economic initiative may face public skepticism, misinformation, or political resistance, this proposal integrates a proactive crisis communication framework, ensuring:

- Immediate response to false narratives A dedicated Crisis Response Team within ACTESA will monitor media coverage and counter misinformation.
- Stakeholder engagement during controversies Open forums and Q&A sessions will be held to address public concerns transparently.
- Independent third-party endorsements Leveraging research institutions and policy think tanks to validate ACTESA's economic projections.

#### A Unified Communication Strategy for Success

This Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Plan ensures that:

- Political leaders fully understand the strategic benefits of the ACTESA Power Play.
- Investors and private sector actors have full confidence in the financial and regulatory framework.
- The public remains engaged, supportive, and well-informed about the opportunities created by the initiative.

By integrating multi-tiered messaging strategies, this plan establishes ACTESA as the leading voice in Africa's agricultural investment and trade transformation, ensuring sustained momentum, policy alignment, and long-term success.

Accordingly, this proposal calls upon the COMESA Council of Ministers to endorse this structured communication strategy, ensuring full stakeholder alignment and public confidence in the ACTESA Power Play.

# 13. Final Summary and Call to Action

Whereas the ACTESA Power Play represents a historic transformation in COMESA's approach to agricultural trade, investment, and industrialization, it is now incumbent upon this Council to ensure that the momentum built through this proposal translates into decisive action, institutional adoption, and economic execution.



#### Throughout this document, a comprehensive framework has been presented that:

- Expands ACTESA's mandate beyond trade facilitation to direct investment mobilization, agribusiness industrialization, and financial structuring.
- Secures a \$300 billion structured investment framework, ensuring that COMESA member states can lead in global agribusiness markets.
- Creates a governance model that integrates public, private, and international financing partnerships, ensuring operational efficiency and financial sustainability.
- Provides a legally sound and politically flexible adoption pathway, allowing member states to opt in without disrupting existing frameworks.
- Implements a clear risk mitigation strategy, protecting investments against economic volatility, political shifts, and market uncertainties.
- Ensures strong stakeholder engagement, guaranteeing that governments, investors, and citizens fully understand and support the initiative.

## The Future of COMESA's Agricultural Economy Can be Decided Now.

#### 13.1 What Is at Stake?

#### To delay action is to accept:

- Continued reliance on food imports, undermining Africa's economic sovereignty.
- Fragmented markets and trade inefficiencies, limiting regional and global competitiveness.
- Missed investment opportunities, allowing other regions to surpass COMESA in agribusiness industrialization.

#### To act now is to embrace:

- Economic self-sufficiency—Africa producing, processing, and exporting its own agricultural wealth.
- Global competitiveness—COMESA leading the way in AfCFTA's agribusiness trade vision.
- Millions of new jobs, thriving businesses, and stable food markets across the region.

#### 13.2 The Path Forward: What This Council Must Do

This proposal calls upon the COMESA Council of Ministers to:

- Approve the Expansion of ACTESA's Mandate Ensuring it has the legal authority to execute
  the Power Play.
- Formally Adopt the \$300 Billion Investment Strategy Unlocking financing and securing structured investments.
- Initiate the Institutional Transition Process Establishing the necessary governance structures and operational frameworks.



• Implement the Communication and Stakeholder Engagement Plan – Ensuring broad-based support across governments, investors, and the public.

#### 13.3 A Moment of Leadership: The Legacy of This Decision

The history of economic transformation is written by those who choose action over hesitation, strategy over uncertainty, and leadership over complacency. The decision made today will define whether COMESA leads the future of African agribusiness or remains on the sidelines of global economic progress.

Let history record that when the moment for action came, we chose boldness over doubt, prosperity over stagnation, and transformation over inertia.

Accordingly, this Council is urged to vote in favor of this resolution, securing the future of COMESA's agricultural economy and ensuring its rightful place as a leader in Africa's economic renaissance.

#### Final Declaration

Now, therefore, be it resolved that the COMESA Council of Ministers hereby adopts the ACTESA Power Play Strategy, expands ACTESA's mandate in accordance with the provisions set forth in this document, and commits to the full realization of this vision for the prosperity of Africa's agricultural future.

Let this be the defining moment where COMESA takes its rightful place as the leader in Africa's agribusiness transformation.