



seasoned practitioners to evaluate the achievements made to date during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and other difficulties faced by African countries. In addition, the session will bring forth the opportunities yet to be seized in an agrifood market projected to grow to US\$ 1 trillion by 2030 and the tools and innovations available to expand intra-African trade.

**Speakers:**

(\*Name, Title, Organization)

1. Blaise Ouattara, Food Safety and Quality Officer, FAO Regional Office for Africa
2. Beatrice Gakuba, Executive Director, African Women Agribusiness Network/AWAN
3. Ziad Hamoui, National President, Ghana Borderless Alliance
4. Gerald Masila, Executive Director & CEO, East African Grain Council

Two key guest speakers spoke from the floor to questions from the moderator:

1. Trudi Hartzenberg, Executive Director, t r a l a c - Trade Law Centre
2. Aminou Akadiri, Executive Director, Fédération des Chambres de Commerce et d'Industrie d'Afrique de l'Ouest (FEWACCI)
3. Adekanla Ilupeju, Afreximbank (*Note: Afreximbank had technical difficulties connecting to the session and sent written talking points following the webinar.*)

**Main highlights:**

(\*For Insights and newsletter. To be based on the theme of the day. Fill in in bullet form)

- “The current global food system is broken and unsustainable, getting worse because of hyper globalization and longer value chains, which amplify the effects of each external shock in Africa.” – Ziad Hamoui, National President, Ghana Borderless Alliance
- Food safety and trade go hand in hand and an efficient food control system is fundamental to facilitating and expanding intra-African trade in agricultural commodities and services.
- Barriers to trade, such as import and export bans, hold back Africans from fully realizing the full potential of intra-African trade to deliver inclusive sustainable development.

**KEY CHALLENGES**

- The lack of information on trade opportunities and available trade-related resources, limited infrastructure for agro-processing and inadequate financing systems are limiting factors to making the AfCFTA more gender inclusive.
- The shortage of hard infrastructure (roads, power, water, etc.) and underdeveloped financing systems are major barriers to increased trade in the

AfCFTA market.

- Government import and export bans against grains (tef, maize, etc.), restrictions on return cargo by inland transporters and inefficient customs formalities increase transaction costs and undermine the growth of intra-African trade.

### **INNOVATIONS PROPOSED**

- Digital payments systems can help overcome barriers to inclusive finance including urban bias, traditional collateral-based banking and limited access to bank accounts for formal and informal micro, small and medium enterprises.
- Automate and digitise customs formalities, documentation requirements and payment settlement systems to expedite the movement of goods across borders, like digital protocols for COVID-19.
- Apply remote sensing and similar technologies to update food balance sheets and trade intelligence in real-time and map areas in need of food and areas with surplus food supplies to ensure food reaches the neediest communities.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS/ NEXT STEPS**

- Policymakers should review the use of export and import bans to ensure policy coherence and consider practical options to make the AfCFTA more inclusive, especially for women and youth.
- Streamline customs formalities by adopting digital technologies to facilitate documentation filing and payment settlement.
- Make information on agribusiness opportunities and resources as well as trade intelligence more accessible and user-friendly for markets using technology and information systems.
- What role can FAO and Other Partners play to support the implementation of the AfCFTA in the agricultural sector?

### **Session Summary:**

(\*To go in final report. Max 300 words. Fill in prose)

The AfCFTA represents a large agrifood market that can help close Africa's persistent food deficit, drive food system transformation and support livelihoods and job creation for Africa's smallholders, enterprises, women and youth. The session covered topics related to agriculture, trade and innovation. Speakers highlighted the importance of efficient food control systems to facilitate trade in Africa; efficient movement of food supplies, including grains, across borders and the regulatory barriers that hinder trade; capacity building of agripreneurs, especially women, in trade processes; and the lack of infrastructure to support trade, particularly information and digital payments and settlement systems. Implementation of the AfCFTA faces many challenges due to Africa's low level of economic integration.

In summary, the speakers and other key participants delivered the following messages:

- **FAORAF** noted the importance of food safety and food standards in facilitating intra-African trade and food security and the role that African Union tools and institutions can play, including the African Food Safety Strategy, the African Food Safety Agency (AFSA) and the AfCFTA.
- **African Women Agribusiness Network** highlighted the critical role of skills in financial and digital literacy and the lack of processing industries, packaging facilities and branding power. Other challenges include poor rural infrastructure and prohibitive transport costs. Key to ensuring gender inclusive intra-African trade for small and informal women traders is access to larger national and regional markets, trade finance and trade-related information.
- **Chana Borderless Alliance** emphasised the important role of technology, innovation and digitalization to build back African agriculture better (renewable energy, increasing productivity, reducing post-harvest losses and investments in infrastructure). Too much attention is given to production and processing at the expense of transport, logistics and other services that are crucial for ensuring competitiveness of trade in Africa.
- **East African Grain Council** shared the experience and insights from the grains sector, especially the impact of export bans on the grain trade and the role that technology can play in trade facilitation by improving customs processes to expedite trade and various geospatial mapping applications to facilitate linkages between food surplus and food deficit areas to satisfy food demand and mitigate food insecurity.
- **Trade Law Centre (Tralac)** noted its collaboration with the International Chamber of Commerce and UPS to build the capacity of traders, including women, on the use of INCOTERMS and trading under the AfCFTA, as well as entrepreneurial and social media training and networking.
- **Fédération des Chambres de Commerce et d'Industrie d'Afrique de l'Ouest (FEWACCI)** highlighted its support to the West African private sector, particularly its work to sensitise women on AfCFTA opportunities and strengthening regional integration on several levels, including language training to bridge the Anglophone and Francophone divide.
- **Afreximbank** has developed innovative policies and tools to facilitate implementation of the AfCFTA Agreement as follows: establishing a Pan-African Payment and Settlement System (PAPSS) and the Africa Quality Assurance Centres (AQAC) to enable African producers to conform to international standards and technical requirements for greater market access for African produced goods; and the Africa SME Development Programme with a focus on several sectors, including agribusiness to expand the export of agro-processed

commodities.

**Tweetable quotes with timestamp:**

(\*For podcast and to go to AGRF Communication for social media. Minimum 3 per session)

- None

**How has the session contributed to the AGRF outcomes?**

\*(For end of AGRF communique/ Press release. List 3 - 5 top outcomes)

- The session has contributed to a shared understanding of the key issues involved in the smooth implementation of the AfCFTA over the next decade and beyond.

**COMMITMENTS**

- FAO will work with other key partners to support the implementation of the AfCFTA, particularly in areas including food control systems and trade facilitation, inclusive agribusiness development and trade and market information systems.