



Advancing the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area: proposing transformative strategic actions

Fifty-seventh session of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development

12 - 18 March, 2025, Addis Ababa

SIDE EVENT

Organized by the Subregional Office for Eastern Africa and the Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information and Negotiations Institute

Food security and cross-border trade: navigating challenges and opportunities amid the implementation of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area

Background

The global food system is facing increasing pressure from various shocks, resulting in exacerbated food insecurity and malnutrition. The number of undernourished people rose from 581 million in 2019 to 733 million in 2023.¹ There are severe challenges in Africa, where 20 per cent of the population face undernourishment.² As deliberations continue on ways to enhance regional trade in foodstuffs under the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Programme of the African Union, the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area offers a significant opportunity to address issues affecting food systems by enhancing regional trade in foodstuffs. There are major hurdles to overcome, however, such as inconsistent sanitary and phytosanitary measures, inadequate infrastructure and high levels of protectionism.

Objective

The side event will be focused on the current state of food security in Africa, the potential impact of the Agreement on food security and the state of intraregional food trade, including critical exporters and trade patterns. During the event, participants will be invited to identify barriers to intraregional trade in food, explore opportunities for enhancing cross-border agricultural trade and discuss the potential benefits of intraregional trade for food security and development. Following an examination of logistical needs and consideration of the roles of various stakeholders in promoting trade and cooperation, attention will turn to best practices and complementary measures to reduce food insecurity on the continent.

1 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and others, *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024: Financing to End Hunger, Food Insecurity and Malnutrition in All Its Forms* (Rome, 2024).

2 Ibid.



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Expected outcomes

The expected outcomes of the side event are:

- (a) Practical recommendations for policymakers to enhance food security through cross-border trade and the effective implementation of the Agreement;
- (b) Action plans for continental cooperation and capacity development;
- (c) Knowledge-sharing in order to enhance awareness and understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with implementation of the Agreement and its implications for food security.

Speakers

The details of the speakers who will feature in the side event will be published in due course.

Target audience

The target audience includes government ministers; representatives of entities of the United Nations system, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the World Food Programme; and members of the donor community, in particular the Global Agriculture and Food Security Programme and the United States Agency for International Development.

Further information

For further information, please contact the Officer-in-Charge of the Subregional Office for Eastern Africa of the Economic Commission for Africa, Andrew Mold (mold@un.org), and the Executive Director of the Southern and Eastern Africa Trade Information and Negotiations Institute – Uganda, Jane Nalunga (jnalunga@seatiniuganda.org).
