

24<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear EAGC Members

## **EAGC COMMUNIQUE ON THE EFFECT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE GRAIN SECTOR**

Greetings from the Secretariat

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of a new coronavirus disease in Hubei Province, China, to be a pandemic, as there was a high risk of the 2019 Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) spreading to other countries around the world. To date over 396,001 cases have been confirmed worldwide. In the EAGC Member countries, Covid-19 positive cases have also been confirmed in Burundi, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Zambia, and Tanzania except for Malawi, and South Sudan where no cases have been confirmed to date.

The Corona Virus Pandemic has continued to affect every aspect of our lives and is causing disruptions in the day to day operations of our businesses in our region and the world over. The pandemic continues to cause anxiety and uncertainty to our members, staff, partners and stakeholders in the grain sector.

During these troubled times, we all need to take precautionary measures as advised by the various Government officials in our countries and remain safe. As the Grain Sector, we are encouraged to note that the Governments are keen to ensure business continuity for essential goods and services and food supplies including trade in food grains, which form part of the staples for most of our citizens. At EAGC, we continue taking precautionary measures to ensure your safety and our staff wellbeing during the pandemic in line with the guidelines issued by the Governments and other authorities in the medical field.

The following are some of the summary guidelines.

- A. At the EAGC Secretariat,
- B. Measures to support to Grain Trade and
- C. Highlights of the measures taken by the various governments that directly impact on the Grain Sector.

### **A. Highlights of Precautionary Measures at the Secretariat**

1. We urge all members, staff and partners, to take precautionary measures provided by the Government officials and Health Authorities including social distancing, washing of hands, sanitization, self-quarantine, and avoid travel outside the countries.
2. In addition, the Government Authorities from all EAGC countries, have guided that staff should work from home. As such, EAGC Secretariat has provided a flexible working schedule where staff can always work from home, work from office in shifts and be available online – phone and internet, to ensure that we continue to provide services to our Members.
3. We continue to identify the critical services which must continue such as access of grains for food security, among others that affect our members so that we can take the necessary measures.

4. We are also continuously assessing the risk of exposure for our staff on any work-related activity and putting in place the necessary mitigation measures.
5. We have allowed our staff who may have travelled or require, to stay at home, or self-quarantine to do so, and are taking appropriate support measures to support them during these times.

## **B. EAGC Institutional Support to Members on Trade Facilitation**

The following are specific guidelines that EAGC, is facilitating members to continue with **trade facilitation** within the Government Guidelines and in the spirit of keeping safe.

1. **Supporting members through trade facilitation for grain supplies through EAGC GSoko to enable the grain processors/millers continuously access the raw materials they need so they can process and supply to consumers.**

Specifically, the secretariat is doing the following:

- a. Providing our members with trade linkage support. To guarantee access to enough grain quantities of good quality, we have been facilitating trade through the EAGC GSoko trading system. The GSoko Trade Desk is continuously receiving purchase orders from grain millers and traders and we thank our members for using the system.
- b. Supporting suppliers on grain transportation and logistics. We are working with reliable Shipping and Logistics Companies who are providing grain transportation and border clearance service.
- c. Border monitoring. With the cross-border restrictions in response to measures to curb the outbreak and spread of COVID-19, EAGC has been keenly monitoring the situation at all EAC borders to assess how the movement of grain commodities is affected. Last week the trucks carrying grain from Tanzania to Kenya were affected at the Namanga Border. However, the restriction was addressed and resolved. We urge our members to share with the secretariat any challenges they may be facing crossing the borders so we can together find ways to resolve them.
- d. Working with financial institutions to avail trade finance solutions that will address the prevailing liquidity constraints affecting the grain suppliers as a result of COVID-19. Currently, we are offering out members with an inventory financing product under GSoko collateral management.

2. **Supporting farmers to procure farm inputs through the EAGC Grain Trade Business Hubs (G-Hubs), to enable farmers plant in good time and continue supplying grains to the markets.** Specifically, the secretariat is doing the following:

- a. Seeking partnerships with agro-input companies who will supply farms inputs (seed, fertilizer, leased farm implements, agrochemicals etc) through the EAGC G-Hubs.
- b. Work with farmers to consolidate their requirements for farm inputs, source collectively and get it distributed efficiently at a lower cost.
- c. Provide any technical advice and information required by the farmers.

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### C. Cross Border Trade Updates from Member Countries

In addition to the precautionary measures taken by the various government, the following are key highlights that will affect particularly on grain trade across the various EAGC Member Countries

#### Tanzania

- Tanzania continues to permit movement of goods across borders, both export and import. However, there are some delays in clearing trucks at borders
- For goods/trucks entering Kenya from Tanzania, only the truck driver and 1 turn-boy are allowed, subject to them having valid travel documents and undergoing a health screening at the border. Furthermore, truck cabins are being fumigated at the border as a precautionary measure.
- There are currently no restrictions for goods/trucks crossing between Tanzania and Rwanda at Rusumo borders.
- The cross-border trade situation remains fluid and EAGC is continuing to monitor the developments. EAGC also requests its Members to share their current experiences and challenges in cross-border trade during this period to enable us to take quick remedial action in partnership with the East African Business Council and other private sector associations.
- All travellers entering the country (both Tanzanian citizens and non-Tanzanians) originating from countries with reported cases of COVID-19 will undergo mandatory isolation for 14 days in areas designated by the Government.
- All travellers entering the country will be required to complete a Health Surveillance Form upon arrival in the country at the port of entry, and undergo additional screening including taking rapid tests for COVID-19, be informed of the prescribed isolation centres, costs of isolation and arrangements for accessing such centres.
- Following completion of the quarantine period, travellers who have not been found with COVID-19 will be released but will continue to be monitored.
- All persons currently within the borders of Tanzania are advised to avoid unnecessary travel to countries where COVID-19 has been reported.

#### Uganda

- No person, Ugandan or otherwise, will be allowed to enter Uganda by land or water except for drivers and accompanying crews, not exceeding 3 persons, for cargo transport vehicles trailers, lorries and other cargo vehicles.
- No buses, mini-buses, salon cars or boda-bodas will be allowed in the country.
- Also, pedestrians, walking on foot, or bicycle rider will not be allowed to enter Uganda or to enter Uganda by road, path or water; nor will they be allowed to exit by those means.

#### Kenya

1. All international flights are suspended effective Wednesday March 25th, 2020 at midnight except for cargo flights whose crew must observe strict guidelines.
2. Foreigners with valid residence permits are allowed into the country. However, they would have to undergo mandatory quarantine at their own expense at government designated premises. (*Note: The truck drivers from other countries will be affected*).
3. Restaurants remain open but only for purposes of facilitating take away services.
4. Suspension of all public gatherings and business meetings.

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5. Government offices, businesses and companies encouraged to allow employees to work from home or work in shifts, except for employees working in critical or essential services.
6. To ensure business continuity for our manufacturers and industries, factories are required to operate using minimum workforce on a 24-hour shift rotation system to assure compliance with social distance requirements and logistics of public transport for workers.
7. All supermarkets required to limit the number of shoppers inside the premises at any given time.

### Rwanda

- All Borders are closed: except for goods and cargo and Unnecessary movement and visits outside the home not permitted
- All returning citizens and legal residents will be subjected to mandatory 14 - day quarantine at designated locations.
- The Ministry of Health has rolled out screening of Covid-19 at all border posts and at the airport, noting that individuals found to have symptoms of the virus infection will be treated in quarantined pending more investigation and laboratory tests.
- Travel between different cities and districts in the country not permitted except for transport of food and essential goods

### South Sudan

1. All international flights are banned following the closure of Juba International Airport and all other airports in the country with the face of all international flights.
2. All international flights descend to end from South Sudan are advised to cease all their operations by mid-night on Monday 23rd March 2020.
3. Closure of all borders crossing in the face of all passengers' buses."
4. Only cargo buses and food trucks and fuel tanks will be allowed.
5. The following flights are however exempt from the ban: **food cargo flights**, aircrafts in the state of emergency, flights passing through South Sudan's air space to destinations further appeal, humanitarian aid operations including medical and relief flights, and technical lading provided.

**Ethiopia, Burundi, Zambia, Malawi, DR Congo:** For these countries, we will continue to monitor the situation in respect to grain trade facilitation and inform our members in the upcoming communiques.

Finally, we acknowledge that this pandemic has implications on our businesses, food security, health and our social structures. However, we encourage all our members, staff and partners, to remain calm and not panic, while adhering to all the set measures and guidelines provided from all supportive sectors. While we anticipate that further measures may be effected, we urge you all to remain safe, as we continue to monitor the situation in the coming days.

**Thank you and God Bless you.**

**Gerald Makau Masila,**  
**Executive Director,**  
**EASTERN AFRICA GRAIN COUNCIL**

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## Annex 1: EAGC Contact Addresses for you to reach us for assistance

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