

Boosting Intra-African Agricultural Trade to Build Resilience of Smallholder Farmers

This session explored how increased intra-African trade has the potential to stabilize regional food supplies, increase the resilience of markets to local production fluctuations and international price shocks, and give farmers access to larger and more lucrative regional markets.

The event featured interventions from a variety of speakers from multiple organizations: IFAD, AKADEMIYA2063, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) secretariat, the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), Cairo University and the Pan Africa Farmers Organization (PAFO). A full list can be found below right.

On Thursday 20 January 2022, IFAD's Change, Delivery and Innovation Unit (CDI) hosted the eighth IFAD Innovation Talk to engage in a dialogue about the impacts of COVID-19 on Africa's agricultural trade, and to reflect on next steps for advancing the implementation of the AfCFTA.

Opening the session, **Ousmane Badiane** introduced the Africa Agriculture Trade Monitor (AATM) report, a unique source of high-quality data and analysis on African agricultural trade, and which offers insights into the potential roles of intra-African trade in accelerating economic recovery and building resilience in the context of COVID-19.

The keynote speakers, **Antoine Bouet** and **Sunday Odjo**, further elaborated on this. **Antoine** offered a thorough overview of the report, explaining the main objectives and findings. Using data trends and visualization to emphasise his points, he concluded that there are still significant trade barriers in the region and that a successful implementation

of the AfCFTA and structural actions will be needed to support development. In combination with this, **Sunday** showed how regional trade could help stabilize markets and increase resilience of small-scale farmers. He identified that the trading patterns among African countries and sizeable overlapping trade flows reveal a potential for expanding regional trade and creating more resilient domestic food markets. He concluded by saying that the current pace of regional trade growth can be boosted through policy interventions that would reduce overall trading costs, increase crop yields and remove cross-border trade barriers.

During the panel discussion, moderator **Chahir Zaki**, and panellists **Elizabeth Nsimadala**, **Komla Bissi** and **Sara Mbago-Bhunu** responded to key questions around the future of intra-African regional trade. Reflecting on the role of innovation in stabilizing domestic food supplies and accelerating the recovery of African

Speakers and panellists at the event

(In order of appearance)

- **Ousmane Badiane**, Executive Chairperson, AKADEMIYA2063
- **Antoine Bouet**, Senior Research Fellow, Markets, Trade and Institutions Division, IFPRI
- **Sunday Odjo**, Deputy Director, Knowledge Systems, AKADEMIYA2063
- **Chahir Zaki**, Associate Professor, Cairo University, 2021 AATM Co-editor, *AGRODEP Modelling Consortium Member*
- **Elizabeth Nsimadala**, Director in charge of Women Affairs, PAFO
- **Komla Bissi**, Senior Advisor on Agriculture Trade and Agriculture Value Chains Development, AfCFTA
- **Sara Mbago-Bhunu**, Director, East and Southern Africa Division (ESA), IFAD
- **Satu Santala**, Associate Vice-President, External Relations and Governance Department, IFAD

The event was moderated by **Gladys H. Morales**, Senior Innovation Adviser, CDI, IFAD.

"Intra-African trade has an untapped export potential of US\$22 billion (43% of intra-African exports)...[but] food systems are riddled with low productivity, greenhouse gas emissions, water scarcity, entrenching, unfair and incomplete pricing, fiscal burdens, and poor policies....Responsible investments, nature-based solutions and agro-ecological strategies, and low carbon and climate-resilient techniques should be incentivized." Sara Mbago-Bhunu, IFAD

economies from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, **Elizabeth** offered a few examples of innovations implemented by PAFO and the Eastern Africa Farmers Federation. Subsequently, **Komla** analysed the

potential benefits of AfCFTA implementation and increased intra-African trade for local producers; and he also shared the next steps for the AfCFTA Secretariat and other actors to advance AfCFTA implementation.

Finally, **Sara** offered key considerations on how African countries, regions and continental institutions can ensure that responses to future crises do not impede cross-border trade. She suggested that food systems have to be transformed, as the food system has a way of becoming inclusive and equitable if we can leverage synergies between the social and environmental to deliver accessible, adequate, and nutritious food for all in a sustainable manner.

In the [Q&A session](#) that followed, speakers gave their views on a variety of topics. (If you are interested in the discussion with the audience, please consult the Q&A report and the event [recording](#) on the [event page](#).)

In her [closing remarks](#), IFAD's Associate Vice-President of the External Relations and Governance Department, **Satu Santala**, emphasised the necessity of innovative ways to address today's challenges. She argued that intra-regional trade and trade policy play a fundamental role in fighting the effects of the pandemic. However, it is essential that policies must be based on evidence and data to assist decision-making. She concluded by stressing the importance of working together and remarking IFAD's commitment in providing assistance and contributing to achieve the goals of AfCFTA.

Boosting Intra-African Agricultural Trade to Build Resilience of Smallholder Farmers – the background

In support of a continental goal to triple the level of intra-African agricultural trade as well as other efforts to increase regional integration, the African Continental Free Trade Area was founded in 2018. Trade under the AfCFTA officially began in January 2021 after having been delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic, which severely affected economic growth, increased poverty and hunger in Africa and caused sharp declines in intra-African trade. AfCFTA implementation and other strategies to boost intra-African trade must be informed by robust, high-quality, and consistent trade data and analysis. The Africa Agriculture Trade Monitor report aims to provide consistent and high-quality statistics, indicators and analysis to inform decisions, policies and strategies and ultimately contribute to increasing the benefits of trade for African countries.

CDI would like to thank the participants for taking part and for making the event such a success and showing how increasing interest and ample opportunities to create systematic approaches for improve global comprehension of progress.

Missed the event? Watch it online!

A recording of the event can be found [here](#).

If you would like to skip directly to certain sections of the event, the times are listed below:

Time (minutes)	Section
00:00-01:20	<i>A sky full of stars</i> by Coldplay
01:36-02:30	Welcome by moderator Gladys H. Morales
02:30-06:15	Opening remarks by Ousmane Badiane
06:15-18:15	Keynote Speech by Antoine Bouet
	<i>Panel discussion</i>
18:15-19:35	Introduction by moderator Chahir Zaki
19:35-27:25	Elizabeth Nsimadala
27:25-33:30	Komla Bissi
33:30-39:00	Sara Mbago-Bhunu
39:00-48:05	Keynote speech by Sunday Odjo
48:05-56:40	Q&A
56:40-1:02:28	Closing remarks by Satu Santala

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