

**COMMON MARKET FOR EASTERN AND SOUTHERN
AFRICA**



COMESA Sanitary and Phytosanitary Workshop

**Opening Statement by Ambassador Dr Mohamed Kadah
(COMESA Assistant Secretary General for Programmes)**

22-30 April 2024

Nairobi, Kenya

Mr Dr. Dennis Onkundi, Director – Veterinary Research Laboratory, Ministry Agriculture & Livestock Development, Representative of the Government of the Republic of Kenya

Dr Janet Edeme, Head of Agriculture and Rural Development Division: Representative of the African Union Commission

Mr Ali BADARNEH Representative of United Nations Industrial Development Organisation

Mr Patrick BASTIAENSEN, Representative of World Organisation for Animal Health – Eastern Africa Sub-Region

***Dr. Saliou NIASSY, Inter-Africa Phytosanitary Council (IAPSC) Coordinator
Senior Government Officials from COMESA Members States SPS Authorities
Colleagues from African Union Commission***

Colleagues from COMESA Secretariat

Distinguished Audience,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of COMESA, I would like to welcome you all to this **workshop which is aimed at revising the COMESA Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Regulations, developing a new SPS Strategy and Implementation Plans for the Animal Health, Food Safety and Plant Health Technical Working Groups**. I would also like to thank the government and peoples of the Republic of Kenya for hosting these meetings and for their warm welcome and hospitality.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

According to the COMESA Treaty, Member States agreed to cooperate in the promotion of agricultural exports in the region by coordinating and harmonizing agricultural policies and regulations. In this regard, in 2009, COMESA SPS Regulations were developed and they are supposed to be implemented by all Member States. The regulations were developed with focus on the harmonization of SPS policies and measures to facilitate trade in the region and beyond. However, these regulations have been facing difficulties in terms of implementation due to several factors, including lack of technical capacity. In addition, since the issuance of the

regulations, several developments have taken place and several new challenges have emerged. For instance, the Africa Continental Free Trade Area came to the fore as a game-changer, the African Union SPS Framework was developed and the continental Strategies for Food Safety, Plant Health and Animal Health were developed. Consequently, there is a need to revise the COMESA SPS regulations to reflect new developments, address new challenges and align them with the continental SPS framework and strategies as well as Annex 7 of AfCFTA Protocol on Trade in Goods. Furthermore, and perhaps even more importantly, it is important that the COMESA SPS regulations are revisited to ensure their effective, efficient and smooth implementation.

Distinguished Audience,

COMESA also adopted an SPS strategy and established an SPS Sub Committee under the Committee on Agriculture to provide technical advice to the COMESA Policy Organs on issues related to SPS in the region. Furthermore, under the SPS Sub Committee, three Technical Working Groups were established to provide specific technical advice on Animal Health, Food Safety and Plant Health. The mandates and roles of these Technical Working Groups are very important to ensure that we address the current SPS challenges. In addition, a new SPS strategy is required to make sure that our long-term vision is precise. I therefore call upon the experts in this workshop to propose a new, precise SPS strategy and practical, achievable Implementation Plans for the Animal Health, Food Safety and Plant Health Technical Working Groups. Notably, all the required new documents should also reflect the AU continental SPS Framework and AU Strategies for Food Safety, Plant Health and Animal Health.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our region lacks capacity in risk assessment/analysis, making it difficult for Member States to establish risk-based SPS measures. Therefore, last year, the COMESA SPS Subcommittee recommended the **establishment of a COMESA Risk Assessment/Analysis Centre** to be used for risk assessment in food safety, plant health and animal health. And of course, this is another important item placed on the agenda for your consideration.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In conclusion, I would like to thank the African Union Commission (AUC) for supporting this workshop. COMESA's collaboration with the AU in the SPS field is a testament to their joint commitment to regional integration. I also thank the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health for supporting the workshop. Last but not least, once more, I thank the government and peoples of the Republic of Kenya for hosting this workshop and their hospitality.

I wish you fruitful discussions.

Thank you!