PELUM KENYA

*Networking for a greener Africa.*

Policy Brief - AEP Kenya

# INTRA-EAC CROSS-BORDER TRADE IN AGROECOLOGICAL PRODUCTS:

## The Case of Kenya's Trade with Uganda and Tanzania

SUPPORTED BY:

AFSA
ALLIANCE FOR FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN AFRICA

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## About PELUM Kenya

Participatory Ecological Land Use Management (PELUM) Kenya is a national network that currently comprises 69 Member Organisations (M.O.s). Its members mandate PELUM Kenya to promote agroecological principles and practices through networking and capacity building, AgroEnterprise and market development, information sharing, and advocacy

The members of PELUM Kenya are Non- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Community-Based Organisations (CBOs), and other networks working with small-scale farmers. The members of PELUM Kenya are categorised into four (4) networking zones: Nairobi/ Central zone, Upper Eastern & Northern Kenya zone, Lower Eastern & Coast zone, and Rift-Western Kenya zone.

### Our Vision

Empowered, prosperous, and healthy communities in Kenya

### Our Mission

To promote agroecological principles and practices for sustainable livelihoods among smallholder farmers, pastoralists and fisherfolk

### Our Strategic Focus Areas

1. Policy influence and advocacy
2. Gender, Youth, and Social Inclusion
3. Building Climate Resilience Through Agroecological Practices
4. Market development for agroecological products
5. Institutional and Network Capacity Strengthening

The Alliance for Food Sovereignty in Africa (AFSA) is a broad alliance of different civil society actors that are part of the struggle for food sovereignty and agroecology in Africa. These include: African farmers' organisations, African NGO networks, specialist African NGOs, consumer movements in Africa, international organisations which support the stance of AFSA, and individuals. Its members represent smallholder farmers, pastoralists, fishers, hunter/gatherers, indigenous peoples, faith-based institutions, and environmentalists from across Africa. It is a network of networks, currently comprising 48 member networks working in 50 African countries
Through this strong grassroots and policy-level engagement, AFSA amplifies African voices in national, continental, and global food governance spaces while promoting agricultural pathways that are just, ecological, culturally rooted, and community-driven.

## Core Focus Areas

AFSA's work is guided by transformative goals anchored in food sovereignty and agroecology, with key focus areas including:

- **Agroecology and Climate Change:** Advocating for agroecology as the leading solution for climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable food production.
- **Seed Sovereignty:** Protecting and promoting farmers' rights to freely save, use, exchange, and sell local and indigenous seeds.
- **Land Rights and Natural Resources:** Supporting communities to secure tenure and defend land, forests, water, and ecosystems from extractive and harmful development models.
- **Biodiversity and Indigenous Knowledge:** Safeguarding Africa's diverse food cultures, ecological knowledge systems, and traditional foods.
- **Food System Governance:** Engaging policymakers and institutions to influence policies, laws, and investment decisions toward equitable and sustainable food systems.
- N**utrition and Healthy Diets:** Promoting diverse, indigenous, and environmentally friendly foods that enhance health and wellbeing.
- **Movement Building and Advocacy:** Strengthening alliances, grassroots leadership, and public awareness to drive a strong people-powered movement for food sovereignty.

# INTRODUCTION

The EAC Treaty and its attendant Protocols and policies commit to promote unrestricted intra-regional trade in goods and services. By providing a favorable policy environment, it is hoped that the EAC will provide market opportunities for value web actors, including smallholder farmers, traders (both big, small, formal and informal), transporters, warehouse/storage units' owners, among others. From an agricultural perspective, the EAC provides a regional market for Partner States, given that the sector accounts for 25%-40% of Partner States' Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employing over 80% of the population in the region, and constituting about 65% of the volume of intra-regional trade. The EAC also has an aspiration to increase the share of intra-regional trade from the current 15% to 40% by 2030.

While the EAC provides immense market opportunities, and while we are witnessing increased adoption of agroecological policies by EAC Partner States at individual national level, the extent to which the current EAC trade ecosystem promotes market for agroecological products requires examination. It is in this context that AFSA commissioned this study to better understand the state of trade in agroecological products within the EAC. Methodologically, the study used Kenya, Uganda, DRC, Tanzania, and Rwanda as a case study, focusing on key border points i.e., Busia (Kenya and Uganda), Mpondwe (Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda), Namanga-Tarakea (Kenya and Tanzania), and Rusumo (Rwanda and Tanzania). This policy brief provides the findings of the study regarding the ecosystem for cross-border trade in agroecological products between: (a) Kenya and Uganda, and (b) Kenya and Tanzania.

## 2. TRADE IN AGROECOLOGICAL PRODUCTS BETWEEN KENYA AND SELECT COUNTRIES.

### 2.1. Kenya-Uganda: Findings at Busia border

Agroecological products at Busia are traded in territorial markets on each side of the country (Kenya and Uganda). The table below shows the different territorial markets and the general category of products sold therein.

*Table 1. Territorial markets at Busia cross-border point*

**Busia-Kenya**

**Korinda Market:** Located near the Busia border, serving traders dealing in fresh roduce, cereals, and livestock.

**Burumba Market:** A key trading hub near the border, where fresh vegetables, fruits, and grains are sold.

**Mundika Market:** A vibrant market within Busia town that supports small-scale traders, including those engaged in agroecological trade.

**Busia-Uganda**

**Soko Posta Market:** The largest open-air market on the Ugandan side, serving traders from both countries.

**Busia Central Market:** Located just at the border, it deals in fresh produce, cereals, and household goods.

**Mataaba Market:** Another key market at the border, attracting traders from Kenya and Uganda.

On the Busia border, agroecological products identified in the territorial markets of Busia, Sofia, and Jumuiya were Bananas, aerial yams (*Dioscorea bulbifera*), beans, sweet potatoes, fish, maize, Forest products like honey, medicinal plants and herbs. Other identified agroecological products in the Busia territorial market include local food plants like groundnuts, sesame (simsim), and cereals, while root crops include yams and cassava. Interviews also revealed a rise in production and trading in other agroecological products like oranges, pineapples, avocadoes, groundnuts, and passionfruit. These were identified as high value agroecological crops to developed value webs in Uganda and Kenya.

*Table 2. Top three traded Agroecological products at Busia*

| Trader/Enterprise Location | Product Sold | Volume (Metric ton) | Volume Ranking |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1st Most Sold Product | Maize | 146.9 | 1 |
| 2nd Most Sold Product | Beans | 92.6 | 2 |
| 3rd Most Sold Product | Sorghum | 35.0 | 3 |

### 2.2. Kenya-Tanzania: Findings at Namanga-Tarakea border

Based on the volumes provided by the sampled farmers, there was at least 165 metric tons of Maize traded from Tanzania to Kenya annually, followed by avocadoes at 84.4 metric tons, potatoes at 31 metric tons, and beans at 25.5 metric tons annually. Almost as much wheat (24.1 metric tons) originating from Tanzania was also traded to Kenya annually. What was unique at the Namanga-Tarakea border is that majority of the farmers do not send their products to the Namanga market, rather, Kenya traders come to the villages to directly purchase form the farmers. Another key issue to note is that these products experience re-export from Tanzania to Kenya and vice versa, mostly in value addition form (maize flour, avocado oil and potato chips among others).

*Table 3. Top three traded agroecological products at Mpondwe*

| Trader/Enterprise Location | Product Sold | Volume (Metric ton) | Volume Ranking |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1st Most Sold Product | Maize | 165.0 | 1 |
| 2nd Most Sold Product | Avocadoes | 84.4 | 2 |
| 3rd Most Sold Product | Irish Potatoes | 31 | 3 |

## 4. TRADING IN CONVENTIONAL PRODUCTS

### 4.1. Kenya-Uganda Conventional Trade Profile

According to data from the International Trade Centre (ITC), maize is the most traded product, which is consistent with the Busia border field reports. Between 2019 and 2023, there was an increase in maize exports from 25,000 tons (valued at $ 35 million) to 59 thousand tons (valued at over $ 211 million). Grain sorghum showed steady growth, with value increasing from $417 million in 2019 to $3,880 million in 2023, and volume from 881 tonnes in 2019 to 6,537 tonnes in 2023, highlighting its emerging importance in the market. Fresh watermelons experienced fluctuating trends, peaking in value and volume mid-period before declining to 846 and 3,046, respectively, suggesting possible market volatility or seasonal influence. Ground nuts had minimal activity, appearing only in 2019 and early 2020 with very low values and volumes, and then dropping out entirely, possibly due to low production or limited market interest.

*Table 4. Kenya's select Agricultural Imports from Uganda (2019, 2020, 2021). Source: ITC*

| Product | 2019 | | 2020 | | 2021 | | 2022 | | 2023 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Value | Volume | Value | Volume | Value | Volume | Value | Volume | Value | Volume |
| Maize | 35,557 | 124,551 | 49,074 | 201,308 | 18,947 | 75,019 | 20,495 | 52,159 | 59,141 | 211,642 |
| Grain sorghum | 417 | 881 | 852 | 1,809 | 2,602 | 5,704 | 5,793 | 9,591 | 3,880 | 6,537 |
| Fresh watermelons | 1,425 | 3,802 | 2,627 | 8,089 | 1,240 | 3,426 | 1,782 | 3,581 | 846 | 3,046 |
| Ground nuts | 34 | 22 | 30 | 38 | 0 | - | 0 | - | 0 | - |
| Tomatoes Fresh or Chilled | 2,500 | 7,612 | 7,603 | 20,696 | 3,037 | 7,775 | 249 | 758 | 48 | 166 |
| Milk and Cream, concentrated | 12,215 | 3,714 | 19,565 | 5,881 | 17,253 | 7,733 | 32,102 | 8,870 | 16,856 | 3,509 |
| Milk and Cream, not concentrated | 41,376 | 63,810 | 34,099 | 55,389 | 38,490 | 59,842 | 45,237 | 70,607 | 45,834 | 81,364 |
| Fresh or dried pineapples | 1,383 | 4,173 | 2,680 | 11,438 | 2,486 | 8,763 | 2,313 | 6,518 | 3,096 | 12,749 |
| Fresh or dried oranges | 550 | 1,776 | 931 | 3,307 | 849 | 13,649 | 1,842 | 4,477 | 2,352 | 6,899 |

*Table 5. Kenya's exports to Uganda in values (000' USD) and volumes (tons)*

| Product | 2019 | | 2020 | | 2021 | | 2022 | | 2023 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Value | Volume | Value | Volume | Value | Volume | Value | Volume | Value | Volume |
| Fresh/ chilled potatoes (excl. seed) | 360 | 2,884 | 3,909 | 26,664 | 7,956 | 66,556 | 3,728 | 33,784 | 5,586 | 85,445 |
| Fresh/chilled carrots &turnips | 2,755 | 12,797 | 3,782 | 19,936 | 4,432 | 23,530 | 3,310 | 19,485 | 4,424 | 27,050 |
| Spices (excl. pepper) | 2,046 | 488 | 1,947 | 544 | 2,034 | 540 | 2,174 | 536 | 2,244 | 699 |
| Dried, shelled peas | 1,534 | 4,147 | 15,860 0 | 16,285 | 4,729 | 8,465 | 3,088 | 6,651 | 2,400 | 10,376 |
| Grain sorghum | 13,246 | 37,522 | 13,199 | 34,996 | 13,570 | 33,447 | 0 | 0 | 7,114 | 17,349 |
| Maize or corn | 946 | 749 | 2,632 | 2,028 | 2,471 | 2,217 | 3,026 | 2,843 | 3,494 | 1,430 |
| Barley | 1,352 | 23,348 | 1,119 | 19,722 | 1,394 | 25,362 | 1,783 | 34,498 | 2,577 | 28,099 |
| Vegetable seeds, for sowing | 3,139 | 153 | 4,411 | 169 | 3,105 | 125 | 2,741 | 110 | 5,033 | 116 |

*Source: International Trade Centre calculations*

### 4.2.Kenya-Tanzania Conventional Trade Profile

Data from the International Trade Centre (ITC) reveals that between 2019-2024, maize was Tanzania's most exported product to Kenya, followed by rice and beans

*Table 6. Kenya's top imports from Tanzania in values (000' USD) and volumes (tons)*[6]

| Product | 2019 | | 2020 | | 2021 | | 2022 | | 2023 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Value | Volume | Value | Volume | Value | Vol | Value | Volume | Value | Volume |
| Live cattle | 9,647 | 8,311 | 4,548 | 3,942 | 1,055 | 1,116 | 1,415 | 988 | 1,527 | 1,242 |
| Live goats | 1,714 | 2,808 | 1,971 | 3,202 | 2,818 | 1,743 | 1,184 | 575 | 1,024 | 918 |
| Maize | 15,034 | 86,087 | 10,349 | 50,775 | 56,258 | 375,484 | 53,500 | 347,690 | 19,380 | 584 |
| Rice | 327 | 1,078 | 26,920 | 64,109 | 75,612 | 161,590 | 24,535 | 44,794 | 194 | 3,676 |
| Beans | 234 | 899 | 272 | 1,354 | 563 | 5,744 | 540 | 6,638 | 133 | 670 |

*Source: International Trade Centre calculations*

[5] n/a means missing data (not captured by ITC). 0 means volume is lower than tons

According to the ITC, between 2019 and 2023, Kenya's total export of maize flour was 20,385,000 metric tons, which was valued at US$10,063,000. Although Kenya imports a lot of maize from Tanzania as indicated in table 5 above, it also exports maize flour to Tanzania, and this is its second largest food export, valued at $3,833,000 over the five-year period under review. Kenya's export of vegetable seeds for sowing is larger in economic value ($7,639,000) than its export of maize, over the 5-year period. Finally, shelled peas are Kenya's third biggest export to Tanzania by volume at 9,419,000 metric tons.

*Table 7. Kenya's exports to Tanzania in values (000' USD) and volumes (tons)*[7]

| Product | 2019 | | 2020 | | 2021 | | 2022 | | 2023 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Value | Vol | Value | Vol | Value | Vol | Value | Vol | Value | Vol |
| Maize | 641 | 430 | 490 | 356 | 2,391 | 4,137 | 293 | 484 | 18 | 37 |
| Maize flour | 2,416 | 5,032 | 1,535 | 2,942 | 959 | 2,036 | 3,241 | 7,041 | 1,912 | 3,334 |
| Rice | 0 | n/a | 0 | 0 | 125 | 372 | 36 | 70 | 0 | n/a |
| Dried, shelled peas | 621 | 2,506 | 683 | 1,982 | 1,478 | 3,383 | 248 | 593 | 567 | 955 |
| Vegetable seeds, for sowing | 1,063 | 55 | 1,212 | 41 | 1,455 | 45 | 1,615 | 149 | 2,294 | 60 |

*Source: International Trade Centre calculations*

It is necessary to highlight that there is currently a lack of disaggregated data on agroecological products within the Harmonized Standard (HS) code for import and export data. This lack means that it is possible that reported trade data does not necessarily cover conventional products exclusively. It is therefore highly probable that the reported data on conventional trade includes agroecological products. It is also important to note that the presented data on agroecological products is purely primary and reflects the findings of a few of the many cross-border points. Moreover, it covers approximately (35%) of the official cross border points of the countries in the study. This implies that if a comprehensive study with a higher geographical scope (border crossings) and sample size were to be undertaken, it would reveal a rise in Agroecological products' trading between Kenya and Uganda and Tanzania respectively.

## 5. AGROECOLOGICAL PRODUCE TRADE ECOSYSTEM IN KENYA

Uganda's trade ecosystem is governed by continental, regional and national policies, strategies, and institutions.

- **African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA):** As the main framework for Africa's trade agenda, the AfCFTA envisions to increase intra-African trade and reduce dependency on foreign food and agricultural inputs like seed, semen, fertilizers and technology. While the AfCFTA could potentially promote intra-Africa trade in Agroecological products, its present design and implementation locks out agroecological products. Indeed, the AfCFTA advances a clearly defined

[6] n/a means missing data (not captured by ITC). 0 means volume is lower than tons

[7] n/a means missing data (not captured by ITC)

orientation towards industrial agriculture. The signing of an MoU between Alliance for Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)-an entity highly criticised as an agent of seed corporations, and the AfCFTA Secretariat[8] is a testimony to this skewed orientation. Furthermore, cumulation provisions under the AfCFTA Rules of Origin (RoO) allow for procurement of seed from third parties[9], thus undermine its potential to support smallholder farmers, which will limit the intra-regional trade of agroecological products.

- **EAC Policies and Strategies**: At the regional (EAC) level, the East African Fruits and Vegetables Value Chain Strategy and Action Plan 2021-31, EAC Common External Tariff (CET) of 2022,[10] the Common Market Protocol, Simplified Trade Regime, and the EAC Elimination of NTBs Act of 2017 among others contain provisions that can be leveraged to strengthen the EAC cross-border trade of agroecological products. For example, to support informal cross-border traders, the EAC Customs Union provided for an STR to make it easier and faster for small scale cross border traders with products (less than US$2,000 in value) that are grown or manufactured in the EAC (in other words, goods of East African origin) to trade with other EAC countries. Also, the capping of a 35% CET on agricultural products like beef, goat, mutton, pork and chicken (fresh, chilled or frozen) as well as vegetables (beans, peas, potatoes, sweet potatoes), fruits (tomatoes, onions, bananas, papaws, watermelons, guavas, mangoes, avocadoes, pineapples, oranges), and cashew nuts and ground nuts protects these products from cheap (often non-agroecological products) agricultural imports and provides for them a non-saturated domestic (EAC) market.

## National Policies that can potentially promote AEPs Trade

Kenya has put in place several policies to focus on value web activities from the farm level through marketing, distribution, and exports to regional markets. For example, the National Agroecology for Food System Transformation Strategy for 2024–2033 was launched in 2024. The National Agroecology Strategy builds on several policies and strategies dealing with agriculture, sustainability, and trade to incorporate agroecological principles. The strategy's main goal is to promote a sustainable transformation of the food system in Kenya to ensure food security and nutrition climate-resilient livelihoods, and social inclusion for all[11]. From a trade perspective, the strategy aims at strengthening mechanisms for the production, distribution, and use of locally produced agroecological inputs, promoting the conservation and use of Indigenous/locally managed seed and livestock breeds, and promoting the consumption of Indigenous foods and protection of traditional food culture[12]. Strategic area four of the strategy specifically targets

[8]AGRA. (2024). Request For Proposal (RFP AGRA-GH-1007): Consultancy for Technical Assistance to the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Secretariat Supporting the Implementation of Agri-Food Trade Under the AfCFTA; agragreen.sharepoint.com/sites/ORACLEADVERTISEDPROCUREMENTS/Shared Documents/Forms/Allltems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2 FORACLEADVERTISEDPROCUREMENTS%2FShared Documents%2FGeneral%2FRFP%2FCaroline%2F2024%2FRFP AGRA-GH-1007% 2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FORACLEADVERTISEDPROCUREMENTS%2FShared Documents%2FGeneral%2FRFP%2FCaroline% 2F2024&p=true&ga=1

[9]For example, under the RoO, maize harvested in an AfCFTA State Party is regarded as wholly obtained even if the maize seed planted was originally imported from (for example) Argentina. Such rules risk creating a situation where maize imports from third parties are over-imported and processed into flour rather than local maize grown by smallholder farmers.

agroecological products trade and aims at strengthening value addition, markets, and trade through (a) establishing and strengthening agroecology actors and actor associations to support the acquisition of inputs and the local and international marketing of products and services; and (b) promoting the use of agroecology foods and products in public and private institutions (schools, hospitals, correctional facilities), social protection and humanitarian relief programs[13]. With more institutional coordination, engagement of farmers, agroecological and other actors in the value web, the passing and subsequent implementation of the Kenya agroecological strategy may provide good lessons for other EAC Partner States.

The Agricultural Policy of 2021 aims to protect and conserve biodiversity and promote the wise use of natural resources that support sustainable agriculture, all of which relate to agroecology. Although lacking in other agroecological principles like the co-creation of knowledge and the re-embedding of food systems in local economies the policy promotes several agroecological principles, including integrated soil fertility management, use of farmyard manure, water harvesting and conservation, crop diversification, management of farm-level biodiversity conservation, functional diversity, including farm forestry, economic diversification, and pasture management.[15]

### Other Agroecological policies in Kenya

From a policy perspective, what sets Kenya apart from other EAC countries regarding commitment by the State to promote Agroecology is that different counties have established (or an in the process to) county agroecology policies to fast-track the broader Kenya National Agroecology Strategy for Food System Transformation of 2024-2033. Moreover, some counties like Murang'a developed agroecological policies (in 2022) way before the national one was developed (recently adopted in 2024).

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[11]MoALD. (2024, November 28). National Agroecology Strategy for Food System Transformation 2024-2033. Retrieved from Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development (MoALD): https://kilimo.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/National-Agroecology-Strategy-for-Food-System-Transformation-2024-2033.pdf

[12]Ibid

[13]Ibid

[14]Awiti, A. O., & Aurillia, N. M. (2024). Evaluating the Integration of Agroecological Principles into Kenya's Legal and Policy Framework. Montpellier: CGIAR System Organization. doi:10.17528/cifor-icraf/009198

[15]MoALD. (2021, December 12). Agriculture Policy-2021. Retrieved from Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Cooperatives (MoALD): https://kilimo.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Agricultural-Policy-2021.pdf

| No. | Policy/strategy | Overall policy/strategy goals |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Murang'a County Agroecology Poli cy 2022-2032 | The policy sets to achieve five objectives i.e., (i ) To support sustainable and participatory approaches to introduction of agroecology production systems and practices in the County; (ii) To support increased awareness on health benefits to life and environment, prioritize marketing strategies, data/infor mation and consumption for agroecology products in Murang'a County; (iii) To support increased productivity and incomes through collaboration with research, education institutions and technology integration of agroecology with conventional agriculture; (iv) To promote adoption of agroecological approaches for sustainable soil systems and agricultural practices in the county ; and (v) To implement standards of production in the sub sector that is in line with both national and internationally set market standards. |
| 2. | Vihinga County Agroecology Policy of 2024 | The policy evolves around five objectives i.e., (i) To promote agroecological practices for a resilient agriculture and food system in the County; (ii) To promote production and utilization of safe and diverse foods for improved nutrition; (iii) To enhance inclusion of vulnerable and marginalized groups in agroecology; (iv) To enhance access to agricultural markets and financial services for agroecology products and actors; (v) To strengthen co-creation and participatory adaptive research on agrobiodiversity in the Vihiga ecosystem. |
| 3. | Busia County Biodiversity Policy of 2016-2023 | The policy aims at restoring and managing biodiversity, through community empowerment, and inclusive approaches. Its broader objectives include: (i) promoting effective conservation and facilitate structured access to biodiversity resources and associated ecosystems; (ii) ensuring equitable sharing of benefits accrued from utilization of biodiversity in Busia County; (c) mainstreaming biodiversity research in county development planning and implementation in Busia County. |

There are also other policies which can be supportive of trading in agroecological products at national and regional level

| Policy | Relevance |
|---|---|
| National Food and Nutrition Security Policy (2011) | The policy can promote intra-EAC trade in agroecological products by supporting sustainable agricultural practices, food safety, and nutrition-sensitive value chains. It encourages diversification and value addition, which aligns with agroecological methods and boosts market competitiveness. The policy also promotes regional collaboration, harmonization of standards, and improved infrastructure, facilitating cross-border trade. By enhancing resilience and productivity through ecological approaches, the policy positions Kenya to contribute to and benefit from intra-EAC trade in safe, nutritious agroecological products. |
| Kenya Climate -Smart Agriculture Strategy (2017–2026) | Kenya's Climate-Smart Agriculture Strategy (2017–2026) fosters intra-EAC trade in agroecological products by promoting sustainable practices that enhance productivity and resilience. By integrating climate adaptation, mitigation, and food security, the strategy supports agroecological methods like agroforestry and conservation agriculture. It emphasizes harmonizing policies and building institutional frameworks, aligning EAC standards to facilitate cross-border trade. Investments in infrastructure, research, and capacity building further strengthen value chains, enabling smallholders to meet regional market demands. Collectively, these efforts position Kenya to contribute to and benefit from the regional trade of sustainable agricultural products |
| National Agribusiness Strategy (2012) | The strategy can promote intra-EAC trade for agroecological products because it fosters value addition, improved post-harvest handling, and enhanced market infrastructure, aligning with regional trade standards. By supporting smallholder participation in agribusiness and encouraging sustainable practices, the strategy enhances the competitiveness of agroecological products. Its emphasis on public-private partnerships and institutional coordination facilitates harmonization with EAC trade protocols, thereby strengthening regional integration and expanding market access for Kenya's agroecological producers. |

| | |
|---|---|
| Postharvest Management Strategy for Food Loss and Waste Reduction (2024–2028) | The strategy aims to reduce the estimated 30 percent of food lost or wasted along the supply chain. By enhancing postharvest handling, storage, and value addition, the strategy improves the quality and shelf life of agroecological products, making them more competitive in regional markets. It promotes harmonized standards and cross-border collaboration within the EAC, facilitating smoother trade. Through a multi-sectoral food systems approach, the strategy strengthens value chains, enabling agroecological producers to access broader markets and contribute to regional food security |
| Agricultural Marketing Strategy (2023–2032) | The strategy can potentially promote intra-EAC trade in agroecological products, given that it aims at enhancing market access, value addition, and regional competitiveness. It emphasizes developing modern market infrastructure, improving transport logistics, and harmonizing product standards to facilitate cross-border trade. The strategy supports digital technologies and market intelligence systems to empower smallholder farmers with real-time information and direct market linkages. By fostering sustainable practices and aligning with EAC trade protocols, the strategy strengthens agroecological value chains, enabling Kenyan producers to access and compete effectively in regional markets. |

However, there are other national policies which are conflicting with AEPs trade due to bias towards of conventional agriculture production and trade.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Kenya | Kenya Vision 2030 | Emphasizes transforming agriculture into a commercial enterprise through value addition and market access. Focuses on industrial production and export-oriented farming, often overlooking smallholder agroecological practices. |
| | Big Four Agenda – Food Security Pillar | Promotes large-scale food production and processing industries, emphasizing industrial agriculture over agroecological methods. |
| | Agricultural Sector Transformation and Growth Strategy (ASTGS) 2019–2029 | Prioritises industrial agriculture through large-scale value chains, mechanization, and private-sector investment. While a National Agroecology Strategy (2024–2033) exists, the dominant policy focus remains on industrial models, often marginalizing agroecological practices. |
| | Kenya Trade Policy (2017) | Aims to integrate Kenya into the global economy by promoting exports. Encourages standardized production systems favoring industrial agriculture, often at the expense of diverse agroecological methods. |
| | Seed and Plant Varieties Act (Cap 326) | Regulates the certification and distribution of seeds, favoring proprietary and hybrid varieties, which can marginalize traditional and indigenous seed systems. |
| | National Agricultural Research System (NARS) | Prioritizes research on high-yield crop varieties and modern farming methods, often overlooking traditional agroecological knowledge systems. |

## 6. IMPLICATIONS OF TARIFFS AND NON-TARIFF BARRIERS ON THE TRADE OF AGROECOLOGICAL PRODUCTS WITHIN THE EAC: FINDINGS FROM KENYA

It is key to note that the prevalence of tariffs and NTBs imposed by both EAC Partner States continues to limit trading in Agroecological Products between Kenya with its regional trading partners i.e., Tanzania and Uganda respectively. These effects manifest in increased cost of doing business, reduced competitiveness, and barriers to market access for cross-border traders, particularly those dealing in agroecological produce, who often operate on thin profit margins. Such Tariffs and NTBs include:

**Prevalence of high export and import tariffs:** Findings revealed that excessive taxation on agricultural goods, including produce inspection fees, import duties, and local government levies, discourages trade by reducing profitability**.**

**Interview with territorial market actors at Busia and Namanga-Tarakea borders revealed that for the export of 2–5 tons of cereals between Uganda and Kenya, traders must navigate seven different trade facilitation agencies at the border, with inspection fees and testing charges totalling approximately 20,000 Kenyan Shillings (USD 200), which is around 10% of the consignment value .**

Women and youth traders from Uganda raised concerns about Kenya's excise duty on eggs, which has rendered them uncompetitive, halting the exports of eggs. This included application of several fees imposed by Plant Health, Standards Bodies, Phytosanitary, Counterfeit, Biosafety, Port Health, and Agriculture Food Authorities to ease trading in cereals and horticultural products under the EAC Simplified Trade Regime (STR). As a result, some agroecological traders have resorted to informal trade routes to evade taxes, exposing them to risks such as confiscation of goods and harassment by border officials.

**Prevalence of NTBs**: High sanitary and phytosanitary standards (SPS) certification costs present significant challenges for agroecological entrepreneurs trading across the territorial markets between Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda respectively. For example, AfriCert, operating in multiple East African countries including Uganda and Kenya charges daily inspection fees of $250, with pesticide residue analysis costing $140 per sample[16]. For agroecological traders trading across the border, findings revealed that the financial burden of these certifications is prohibitive and reduces their competitiveness compared to larger agribusinesses that benefit from economies of scale. Furthermore, in Namanga-Tarakea and Busia, interviews with territorial market traders revealed that agroecological traders face significant challenges due to inadequate storage facilities for perishable products like fruits, vegetables, fresh grains, and pulses. This deficiency, together with a lack of agroecologically tailored common-user facilities, forces farmers to sell their produce immediately after harvest, often at lower prices, to prevent spoilage. The absence of proper storage hampers their ability to engage in collective marketing and negotiate better terms, leading to diminished incomes.

**Lengthy approval processes at border points** which often takes between 1.5-2 hours against the recommended 30 minutes for traders using the STR window have led to delays, resulting in post-harvest losses, particularly for perishable goods like fresh vegetables and herbs.

**Multiple permits and complex documentation requirements** significantly hinder agroecological traders from accessing markets across East African borders. Traders face extensive paperwork, including permits from KEBS, UNBS, KEPHIS, and the EAC Trade Permit Certificate, which are tedious, costly, and short-term, making compliance difficult. Many agroecological traders struggle with registration and value addition procedures, as they lack formal knowledge about processing documents. For example, at Busia border post, traders still incur charges to obtain the Simplified Certificate of Origin, which goes against the purpose of the STR. Moreover, the laboratory services required for standards certification are not available at the border. The far distance traders are required to travel to access these phytosanitary services, then, delays delivery of his consignment.

**Limited awareness, operationalization, and domestication of the STR policy's provisions** for small-scale cross-border traders including requirements of traders still incur charges to obtain the Simplified Certificate of Origin have promoted the increased use of non-regulated border crossing points (panya roads) and limited agroecological enterprises' capacity to maximize the trade opportunities that territorial markets offer. Field data also revealed that traders at Mpondwe border crossings still pay taxes on agricultural products like plantain (gonja) and edible palm oil (huile rouge) despite such products being on the common list for products with preferential treatment.

**Multiple currency exchange** significantly impacts agroecological traders' participation in cross-border trade. Unlike large-scale traders who hedge against currency fluctuations, small agroecological entrepreneurs lack financial buffers, forcing them to sell at lower prices or absorb losses. This discourages participation in cross-border trade, limiting their ability to scale businesses and invest in value addition.

[16]AfriCert. (2024, January 10). Organic Fee Schedule 2024.
Retrieved from AfriCert: https://africertlimited.co.ke/wp-content/uploads/ORGANIC-FEE-SCHEDULE.2024.pdf

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**Streamline customs operation to facilitate cross-border AEP trade:** There is an ongoing revision to the EAC Customs Management Act (CMA) of 2004, which aims to streamline customs administration operations and procedures to align them with trade facilitation initiatives such as advanced ruling, duty remission schemes, exemption regimes, and export promotion measures. The review should prioritize cross-border trade facilitation of AEP to integrate agroecological value web actors in the EAC Market,and integrate Trade Information Desk Officers (TIDOs) in its scope.

**Sponsor an EAC Agroecology Policy:** On July 12th, 2025, the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA) adopted a motion urging the EAC Council of Ministers and Partner States to promote Agroecology as a pathway to fostering sustainable, resilient, and equitable food systems across the EAC. As one of the leading exporters of agricultural products, Kenya, through the Ministry of EAC should champion an EAC Agroecology policy and engage other Partner States on the same.

**Policymakers should consider regional currency harmonization, fair exchange rate mechanisms, and mobile money innovations** to ease transactions. Without such interventions, currency exchange issues will continue undermining agroecological trade growth and discouraging smallholder participation in regional markets.

**Organize and strengthen farmer organizations**: The development of more producer organizations and the strengthening of existing ones is an important step in enabling the availability of agroecological products. Organized producer groups facilitate producer-led co-learning and sharing of agroecological principles and practices, which may strengthen production.

**Scale up the use of Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGS):** Producer cooperatives and associations should organise to strengthen their ability to verify the authenticity of their products. Governments should encourage citizen participation in Participatory Guarantee Systems, create dedicated spaces in local markets specifically for trading agroecological products, and invest in the provision of common user facilities (e.g. cold rooms and storage facilities) at territorial markets, specifically for agroecological products

**Establish National Directories of Agroecological Producers, Entrepreneurs, and Products**: The establishment of national agroecological directories, which is a listing of agroecological producer cooperatives, agroecological entrepreneurs, and agroecological products, would be an important tool for EAC member countries to develop. This would allow for the identification of agroecological producers (producer cooperatives and agroecological entrepreneurs) and the registration of agroecological products.

**The Government should provide incentives to produce agroecological products as well as for appropriate labelling and transportation.** It should ensure that national Standards Authorities enable AEEs/farmer cooperatives to comply with appropriate standards, without the product certification process becoming a barrier to entrepreneurship. This will enable greater efficiency in tracking agroecological products.


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