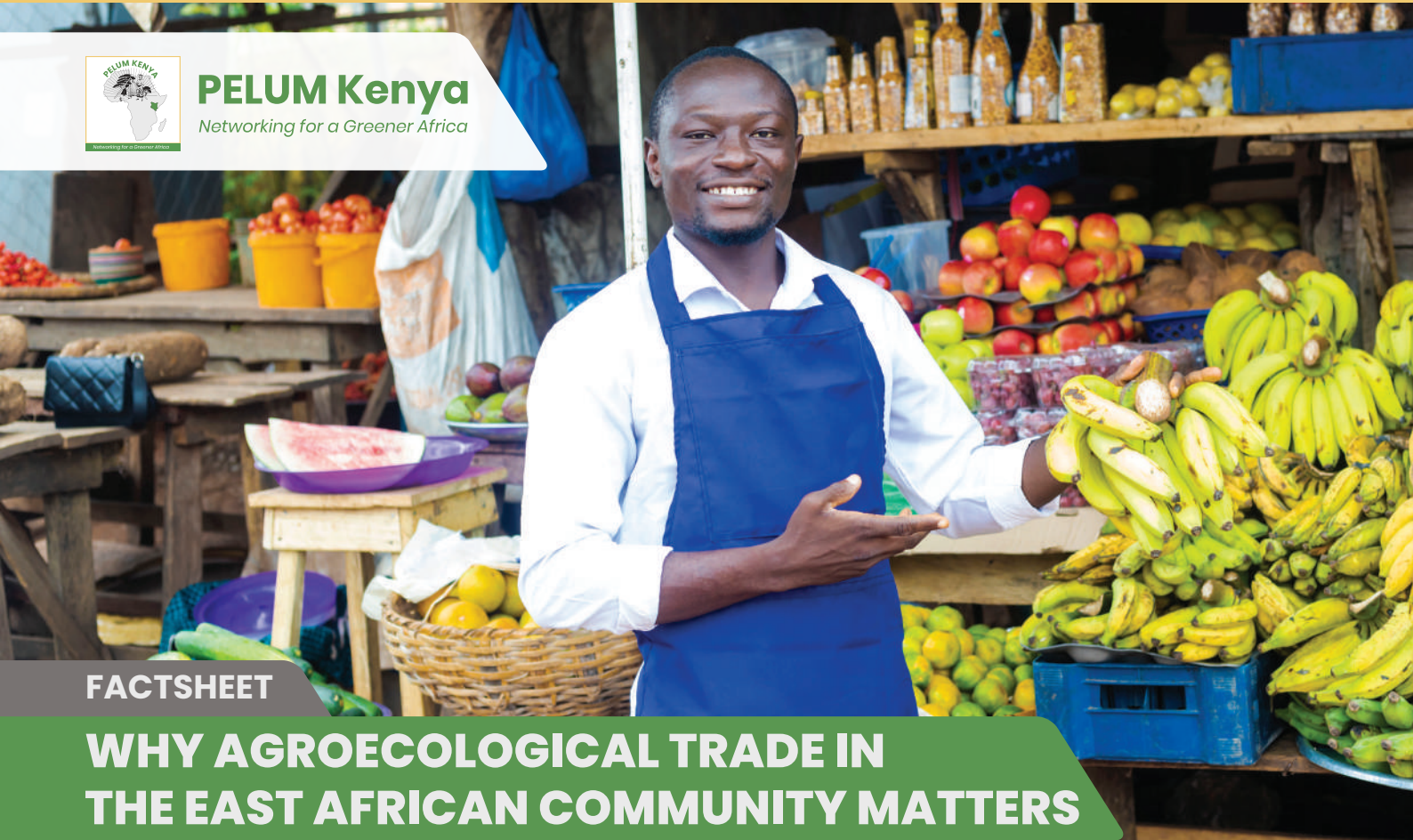




**PELUM Kenya**  
Networking for a Greener Africa



**FACTSHEET**

# WHY AGROECOLOGICAL TRADE IN THE EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY MATTERS

## Evidence, Market Opportunities and Policy Context

Agroecological products are increasingly traded across East African borders through territorial markets driven by smallholder farmers, traders and local enterprises. Strengthening this trade presents an important opportunity to support rural livelihoods, sustainable agriculture and regional food systems within the East African Community.

### What is Agroecological Trade?

Agroecological trade refers to the cross-border exchange of food and agricultural products produced using ecological, sustainable, and socially just farming systems that support biodiversity, soil health, and local livelihoods.

Agroecological trade is rapidly expanding across EAC borders including Busia, Namanga, Mpondwe, and Rusumo, driven largely by smallholder farmers, women traders, youth, and territorial markets.



- Agroecological products are already traded across major EAC borders including Busia, Namanga, Rusumo and Mpondwe.
- Trade in agroecological products supports livelihoods for smallholder farmers, women traders and youth enterprises.
- Growing regional demand for sustainably produced food creates opportunities to expand agroecological trade.
- Emerging agroecology policies in several EAC countries provide an enabling foundation for scaling regional markets.
- Agroecological products are rarely distinguished from conventional agricultural products in regional trade systems, limiting their visibility in trade data, certification frameworks and policy support.



## Evidence From Major Border Trade Corridors

Evidence from cross border markets shows substantial volumes of agroecological products moving across the region.

### Busia (Kenya & Uganda)

- **146.9** metric tons of **maize** traded
- **92.6** metric tons of **beans**
- **35** metric tons of **sorghum** traded annually
- **17.3** metric tons **cassava**

### Namanga Tarakea (Kenya & Tanzania)

- **32,538** metric tons of **avocados** traded annually
- **41,310** metric tons of **bananas** traded annually

### Rusumo (Tanzania & Rwanda)

- **10,500** metric tons of **cassava** traded annually
- **9,000** metric tons of **beans** traded annually



## Why Agroecological Trade Matters

### Strengthens Territorial Markets

Agroecological trade is deeply embedded in territorial markets that connect rural producers with regional consumers. These markets play a critical role in linking smallholder farmers to regional value chains and food markets while supporting the circulation of locally produced food within the region.

### Supports Inclusive Livelihoods

Agroecological trade supports a wide range of actors across the food system, including:

- Smallholder farmers
- Women cross-border traders
- Youth transporters and aggregators
- Agroecological small and medium enterprises

In many border markets, women dominate aggregation, value addition and retail trade, while youth are heavily involved in transport and logistics services.

Savings groups and trader associations, such as cross border trader SACCOs in Busia markets, are also helping traders access credit and expand agroecological enterprises.

### Builds Climate Resilience

Agroecological production systems contribute to more sustainable and climate-resilient food systems by:

- Improving soil fertility and biodiversity
- Reducing dependence on synthetic fertilizers and pesticides
- Strengthening farm-level resilience to climate shocks

These practices are increasingly important as climate change disrupts agricultural production across East Africa and creates the need for more resilient food systems.

## Policy Windows for Agroecological Trade

### African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

The AfCFTA connects **55 African countries** and more than **1.3 billion people** into a single continental market. By reducing tariffs and promoting regional value chains, the agreement creates opportunities to expand intra-African agricultural trade, including sustainably produced agroecological products.

### East African Community Frameworks

Several EAC regional frameworks already provide a foundation for expanding cross-border agricultural trade:

- **EAC Common Market Protocol** – promotes the free movement of goods, labour and services across member states.
- **Simplified Trade Regime (STR)** – supports small-scale cross-border traders by simplifying customs procedures and reducing documentation requirements.
- **EAC Agriculture and Food Security strategies** – aim to strengthen regional agricultural value chains and improve food security.

These frameworks provide important entry points for strengthening agroecological trade within the region.

### Policy Gap in Regional Trade Systems

Despite these opportunities, agroecological products are rarely distinguished from conventional agricultural products within regional trade systems. Improving policy recognition, trade data systems and certification frameworks could significantly strengthen the visibility and competitiveness of agroecological products in regional markets.

### Emerging / Existing National Policies Supporting Agroecology

Example layout:

Country	Policy
Kenya	National Agroecology Strategy for Food System Transformation (2024–2033)
Uganda	National Agroecology Strategy (2023–2029 – under development)
Tanzania	National Ecological Organic Agriculture Strategy (2023–2030)
DRC	Sustainable Agricultural Policy (2022–2032)

These policies signal growing recognition of agroecology in regional food system transformation.



**Key Takeaway:** Agroecological trade is already contributing to regional food markets and rural livelihoods across East Africa. Strengthening policy support, market systems and regional coordination can unlock its full potential for sustainable food systems and regional economic integration.

For more information, click the link below to read/download our report:

[https://afsafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/eac-ae-Products-trade-report\\_new.pdf](https://afsafrica.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/eac-ae-Products-trade-report_new.pdf)

OR

Scan the QR Code below to read/download the report:



#### Our Contacts:

+254 709 746 939

info@pelumkenya.net

Supported by:

