



Activity brief (December 2014)

Strengthening the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa's (ACTESA)

Program Development and Implementation

1 June 2013 – 31 March 2015



Background: The countries of eastern and southern Africa are frequently affected by food shortages and drought, but the region as a whole has the potential to produce enough food for regional consumption and even a surplus for export.

Individual countries cannot achieve this goal on their own. It will require policies that free up the movement of food commodities within the region, and assistance to address agricultural issues that cross national boundaries – coordinated pest and disease control and management of transboundary water resources, just to name a few. Such issues fall under the remit of Africa's regional economic communities such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

The COMESA Heads of State established the Alliance for Commodity Trade in Eastern and Southern Africa (ACTESA) in 2009 as a specialised agency to integrate small farmers into national, regional and international markets.

As a young organisation, the Alliance has yet to secure a sustainable organisational and resource base. The AAPF is funding a series of activities designed to support ACTESA Secretariat to demonstrate its credibility and establish the usefulness of the Alliance and its activities to key stakeholders.

Objective: ACTESA was established with the goal of creating a policy and operating environment conducive to wide-scale integration of smallholder farmers into various markets. The key objective of this activity is to enhance ACTESA's capacity as a facilitator of policy dialogue and as a knowledge hub on staple food markets in its region.

Activity description: The AAPF is assisting ACTESA to promote sustainable agricultural development, improved employment opportunities and the alleviation of poverty. The activity builds on previous Australian Government assistance to ACTESA. It enables ACTESA to put into action priorities for regional development identified in its Operational Plan, including by strengthening its policy advocacy functions and

establishing a knowledge portal on staple food markets and trade in the region. Specific components include:

- the placement of an internationally recruited technical adviser in ACTESA Secretariat;
- short-term technical assistance in a range of fields, including: partnership facilitation; program development and management training; web design/IT support for knowledge portal development; and monitoring and evaluation, to support capacity development;
- funding for policy seminars and a study tour on a key policy issue; and
- funding for workshops, regional consultations and training for Secretariat staff and key partners.

Sector: Agriculture and food security

Outcomes: The activity will:

- enhance ACTESA Secretariat's capacity to implement key priorities of its Operational Plan;
- educate key decision makers and the public to better understand and support regional commitments to allow free cross-border trade in staple foods; and
- establish a regional knowledge portal for ACTESA that collates information and best practice in relation to staple commodity markets in the region.

A review of the activity indicated that significant progress had been made in technical areas, including the fertilizer and seed programs, and some support to informal cross-border trade monitoring in conjunction with the World Food Programme. Support was provided to the governance arrangements for the newly formed board and organisation. The flow on effect for the fledgling ACTESA organisation is that their progress in technical areas has demonstrated its success in effectively using DFAT funding, which has enabled them further access to additional funding from other donors, including USAID.

The success of this activity to date demonstrates that small, well-targeted interventions can provide larger, longer-term benefits.

Participating organisation: ACTESA

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Implementation partner:	Imani Development
Total cost:	AUD 969 478