

## **PRESS RELEASE: THE REGIONAL MULTISTAKEHOLDER WORKSHOP COMMUNIQUE**

**Blantyre, Malawi November 8, 2022:** Tea stakeholders from seven tea producing countries meeting in Malawi came up with various ways of increasing market by advocating for the harmonization of the multiple Tea standards and certification requirements to ensure that compliance is more accommodative and cost efficient.

The 94 participants from Burundi, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania came together in Blantyre, Malawi on the **27<sup>th</sup>, October 2022** during a Regional multi-stakeholder workshop.

The theme of the workshop was: **Fostering Genuine and Inclusive Sustainability in the Tea Value Chain.**

TrustAfrica and Solidaridad together with the East African Trade Association (EATTA) and the Tea Association of Malawi facilitated the Regional Tea Workshop aiming at strengthening the coordination amongst Tea industry players in Africa; amplifying voices of smallholder producers and workers and sharing marketing and trade information.

“We express our appreciation to the Tea Association of Malawi for hosting this event and to the Government of Malawi through the Ministry of Trade & Industry for its strong support to the Tea industry. We appreciate the leadership of Honourable Mark Katsonga-Phiri, MP- Minister of Trade and Industry in facilitating dialogue and advancing inclusive policy formulation processes. We further acknowledge the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Netherlands for providing funds to host this inaugural Multi Stakeholder Platform,” reads a communique from the three partners.

The Regional Workshop took place as the Tea Sector continues to grapple with the recurring climatic shocks that negatively impact on production and productivity of Tea, the rising costs of fuel and fertilizers impacting on the cost of production and negatively affecting profitability of Tea, provided a platform for rethinking alternatives for transforming the Tea sector.

The Country Voices from Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Uganda and Tanzania underpinned areas for common action at regional level and areas for national action which lie on the bedrock of policy and programme action across the board.

“We, the delegates, harmonized our understanding of inclusivity and sustainability and recognised that a holistic view of political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and legal considerations need to be factored in order to achieve an inclusive sector,”

The Tea sector actors which included producers, workers, packers, brokers stressed the need to strengthen the regional markets and strengthen collective action to benefit from economies of scale.

“We call upon Governments of member states to accelerate the harmonisation of tariff systems between Regional Economic Communities (RECs) which include Common Market for

East and Southern Africa (COMESA, East African Community (EAC) and Southern African Development Community (SADC) . We also call upon Governments to accelerate the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, which will help build and integrate markets for tea production especially in relation to smallholder farmers and value addition into Tea products,” said participants.

They also agreed to strengthen collaboration between diverse stakeholders to address the barriers to trade that impede the smooth and quick movement of Tea.

In their quest to foster genuine and inclusive sustainability in the Tea value chain, the stakeholders committed to, advocate for development and finalization of national tea policy documents that promote sustainable natural resource management, decent work, fair value distribution, sustainable consumption, and an inclusive tea sector.

They further agreed to establish an information portal which will be a repository of EATTA country members policy formulation for standards, guidelines and marketing information.

Other interventions they agreed on will include enhancing gender inclusivity by amplifying the voice of women and youth through involvement of women and youth in leadership positions especially at the key decision-making positions such as factory level, re-looking at the cultural barriers towards helping women and youth to take up leadership roles in the various institutions/ levels in the value chain.

The participants also agreed to support cross border trade by facilitating collaboration with member states involved in the tea auction to ensure faster flow of trade amongst them to deliver value, take advantage of the AfCFTA, EAC COMESA and SADC trade agreements to foster inter-trade across Africa look into ways of promoting local processing/ value addition to enhance local consumption and growth of cottage industries and mapping and identification of new emerging markets to avoid over reliance on the traditional markets.

More interventions will be to diversify investment in promoting the growing and production of specialty teas which fetch a better return on investment compared to the traditional teas and to leverage on the Mombasa Tea Auction, by taking advantage of the good will, diversity and strength of the member states to ensure that the auction process platform is inclusive.

The October 2022 Regional Tea Multistakeholder Workshop marks a turning point for EATTA in strengthening its member services, its inclusive convening power and advocacy at regional level.

“We call upon governments, development partners, civil society organizations, the private sector, farmers to turn promises into action and investment in the Tea sector. Tea production and marketing systems must reform and transform to be genuinely sustainable,” reads the communique

**About TrustAfrica**

*TrustAfrica is a pan-African public foundation that seeks to secure conditions for democratic participation, equitable development and African philanthropy across the African continent. Led by Africans, TrustAfrica organizes meetings, catalyzes ideas, grants and provides technical assistance to organizations working to advance these goals.*

**About Solidaridad Network**

*The Solidaridad Network is an international civil society organisation founded in 1969. Its main objective is facilitating the development of socially responsible, ecologically sound and profitable supply chains. It operates through eight regional expertise centers in over 50 countries*

