



**The Eastern Africa Farmers Federation –EAFF.**

**2013 Farmers 3<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly**

**Royal Palace Hotel – Bujumbura, Burundi**

**5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> August 2013**

**Theme: Towards Economic Sovereignty of the Eastern Africa  
Farmer**

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## All Protocol Observed

The guest of honour, I gladly take this opportunity to thank, your excellency first for accepting to host us in Burundi and secondly for your accepting to be our guest of honour. May I, your excellency on behalf of my board, council and delegates to this General assembly appreciate the moral support and logistical help we have received from the honorable minister of agriculture Hon Odette Kayitesi. The minister has always granted us space and time for us to meet her, not only for the purpose of the general assembly, but on other matters that we have found necessary to consult, within a short notice and out of her busy schedule. We have not taken this opportunity for granted but as a clear testimony of your support to farmer organisations and the agriculture sector. I thank and welcome all the delegates of EAFF and our guest for accepting our invitations and coming.

The Eastern Africa Farmers Federation was founded in 2001 and it is a voice of all farmers in the region. We have membership in 10 countries i.e. Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, DRC, Ethiopia, Eritrea, South Sudan and Djibouti. With 22 apex producer organizations. On membership we capture the most important membership that are broad based in representation i.e. lobby and advocacy organizations, commodity associations, producer cooperatives, livestock and pastoralist, and women in agriculture.

To be able to enhance our representation we have negotiated space within the Regional Economic Communities and have signed MOUs with COMESA, IGAD and EAC. With the EAC we have been accorded observers status on the council of ministers and are negotiating signing of an MOU with EALA. On research we represent farmers in the boards of Association for Strengthen Agriculture Research in Eastern and Central Africa (ASARECA) and Forum for Agriculture Research in Africa (FARA).

The majority of our membership are small scale farmers (80%). Our business inclination is commercialization of small scale agriculture for economic empowerment that ensures improved incomes of our farmers and ensure sustainable food security and nutrition. Our strategic plan focuses on capacity building through provision of economic services and organization of small scale

farmers to facilitate better service provision and enable them improved farming and access to markets.

The EAFF convines an assembly such us this, every four years. The assembly is important to us since it gives our membership an opportunity to update themselves on developments in their organization and insights that reflect and contribute to future growth of their organization. This forum also facilitates interaction between ourselves and our strategic partners and a wide spectrum of stakeholders in the agriculture sector.

Your excellency, Eastern African Farmers Federation (EAFF) is a legitimate and professional network with a competently recruited secretariat and a democratically elected leadership. We have in place elaborate governance tools and instruments that will assist us during this general assembly, address the required governance matters on leadership and financial accountability.

Your excellency, small scale agriculture that dominates our region provides over 70% of the food we eat, under very difficult conditions. Apart from the financial challenges there are other challenges such as market access, depletion of natural resources - soils, extension, technology, support to women farmers and involvement of youth in agriculture. In addition other challenges have emerged i.e land, climate change, energy, farm inputs and harmonization of policies and standards to facilitate regional trade. As regards levels of productivity by our farmers it is low and requires significant improvement.

This require a multisectoral approach based on a technology and innovative models of production that works for smallscale farmers. Governments have a crucial role to play in facilitating this development. We however believe that trade would be an appropriate catalyst to productivity. In addition we need to stablize issues of land and especially legal rights to land in line with the African Union land policy initiatives as an incentive to producers. This will encourage our farmers to invest in their land. There is also need for more investments in the sector and policies that will enable agriculture to flourish. Sustainable food and nutrition security should not only be addressed at national level but also, at regional level. We fully support the EAC food security action plan and regional food reserve proposal. EAFF will be available to participate in all process that ensures implementation of these two very important actions.

As regards the EAC common market, we appreciate this development, but those of us in agriculture have been subjected to non-tariff barriers generated by member countries to ensure national food security. We do realise that governments have a role to play and rights to ensure food security for their citizens, but not at the expense of farmers. We are a private sector and in business. In situations where governments want to enhance their national food strategic reserves from agriculture commodities such as rice, maize, wheat etc. Governments must position themselves as clients and purchase from farmers at competitive prices. As opposed to what we have witnessed in the past, where governments deny producers profitable external markets subjecting them to poor domestic prices and exploitation by the middlemen.

We want regional markets fully open and accessible to farmers of the region, for us to provide food to consumers in our region. Barriers to trade in food commodities would work against regional integration. Trade is the only sure way of achieving sustainable regional integration, because through trade people tend to know each other, share socially and economically and even develop trust that ensures cohesiveness and co-existence.

To ensure free trade in agriculture commodities it is important that we address policies around trade and support to the agriculture sector. Policies around farm inputs and trade must be harmonized. Interventions such as subsidies in farm inputs must be based on a common regional policy. What we call for is harmonization of national policies and strategies to ensure improved performances of agriculture in the region for sustainable regional food security and nutrition. A regional agriculture policy would assist facilitate this development.

The EAFF has been collaborating with Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) that comprises of Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, South Sudan and Sudan on two very important initiatives i.e CAADP compact and Drought, Disaster, Resilience, Sustainability, Initiatives (IDDRSI). The compact is providing a framework for on going and future IGAD projects and programmes and is well aligned with IDDRSI that focuses on resilience in Arid and Semi Arid lands (ASALs). The two initiatives are important because IGAD region is unique in that it is highly food insecure and currently receiving about 40% of World food aid to a population of 3% of global population.

This does not necessarily mean that IGAD region lacks the potential to overcome its food insecurity concerns. In terms of population, the IGAD population as at 2012 was 215 million and is expected to grow to 312 million by 2030. Agriculture contributes 35% of GDP and livestock production agriculture being the key subsector contributes 10 to 20% of GDP.

The IGAD region is important to EAFU because it is within our mandate area and we have membership already except in Sudan that will be on board before end of the year. It is we farmers and pastoralists within the IGAD region that are subject to hunger and drought related disasters. The initiatives that IGAD has formulated for implementation are of great significance and of importance to we the producers and pastoralists in the region.

EAFU will be available and committed to a successful implementation of these initiatives of IGAD and other programs. As a priority these programs should catalyze agriculture production and food security by harnessing innovative demand driven technologies and drought management capacity to reduce vulnerability to drought.

Since the 2<sup>nd</sup> farmers General assembly in Arusha, Tanzania in August 2009, we have witnessed growth in membership, partnerships, networking, relationships in form of MOUs and observer status and representation on committees and boards of regional and international organizations, affiliations and capacity building through trainings, policy and advocacy protocols. In addition we have witnessed growth in funding by our strategic partners from Kenya Shillings sixty (60m) million in 2009 to Kenya Shilling over one hundred and sixty (>160m) million in 2012. The activity progress report will be presented to you by my chief executive and in addition documents at your disposal will provide you with detailed information on our achievements.

On representation we have been able to establish sound linkages with our National and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and researchers. This has provided us with a unique opportunity as farmers to thoroughly define ourselves to these parties and service providers and stakeholders, especially on the character of our agriculture which is predominately small scale and our desire to

commercialize it,through appropriate policies and support in production,market access,science and technology and investments.

It is now clear to all,that we want to modernize our agriculture,but most importantly that,it is sustainable and ensures proper management of our natural resources and the enviroment as it benefits from our traditional knowledge and experiences.Our ultimate goal as we improve our incomes and livelihoods is to enhance the dignity of our citizens.This will only happen by ensuring that our region is not only food secure but achieves sustainable food sovereignty.Access to quality and adequate food by all in our opinion is a human rights issue.Your excellency we are not amused when we see photographs of hungry, malnourished and emaciated children,women and men out there,used as a fund raising outfit.

The membership of EAFF is smallscale (80%) .For them to commercialize i.e produce and access profitable markets they need a business model that works for them.EAFF has through close examination and lessons globally considered the cooperatives the most appropriate business model for small scale farmers.Our belief in the producer cooperatives is demonstrated by a real presence of cooperatives on our membership.We have four(4) apex producers cooperatives in our membership i.e Tanzania Federation of Cooperatives (TFC), Cooperative Alliance of Kenya (CAK) the National Confederation of Cooperative in Rwanda(NCCR)and two provincial cooperatives ,the Oromia Coffee Cooperative Union of Ethiopia and the (COOCENKI)of North Kivu- DRC.We are aware that cooperatives in many of our countries have performed poorly and still have an image problem.EAFF conducted a study to find out what lend to the situation. We found out that they were founded on laws that have short comings that resulted to governments and political interference.EAFF through a lengthy participatory and consultative process has put in place a regional cooperative model law.We have presented our final draft to the EAC secretariat and EALA.As a follow up we have started a process of informing and lobbying for its support by national governments.This law will help streamline and harmonize cooperative laws in our region by ensuring autonomy and ownership by members.This accompanied by an elaborate and appropriate policy and regulatory framework,will encourage growth and better service delivery by cooperatives.I take this opportunity of us being in Burundi and with you,your

excellency to seek your government support to the model law we have presented to the EAC for support and approval by the summit. It will be of great value to Burundi and especially now that you are at initial stages of streamlining your cooperative movement. I had the opportunity to represent EAFF during the International Year of Cooperatives held in Kigali, Rwanda on 6<sup>th</sup> July 2012. The messages remain strong in times of crises. Messages delivered during the Kigali celebrations further strengthened our resolve that we must work towards a new generation of cooperatives, fully owned by members and fully responsive to members needs. According to FAO reports cooperative will help small scale farmers take full advantage of available opportunities and help them overcome their constraints and risks. This will significantly contribute to growth of their business, eliminate hunger and improve livelihoods. According to FAO (2012) reports the largest private domestic investors are farmers. Cooperatives will strengthen capacities of smallscale farmers who are the largest investors in agriculture, especially in developing countries. By 2012 their total investment exceeded USD 5 trillion. It is very unfortunate that in Agriculture our governments are putting emphasis in policies that encourage foreign and direct investments in agriculture. Emphasis should be in support through high investment to small scale farmers who are the greatest investors in agriculture currently.

Your excellency, messages from different presenters and especially the president of International Cooperatives Alliance (ICA) at opening ceremony of the Kigali meeting was very clear on the value of cooperatives to the poor and other vulnerable groups and I quote, by placing human needs at their core, cooperatives respond to today's crises of sustainability and deliver a distinct form of shared value. Quite simply a cooperative is a collective pursuit of sustainability for it seeks to optimize outcomes for a range of stakeholders without seeking to minimize the benefits for any one stakeholder. EAFF is committed to ensuring that producer cooperatives are established and thrive under acceptable laws and fully ensure that our producer cooperatives are professionally governed and managed. Your excellency, the EAFF will be joining the global community of smallscale farmers and traditional fishers in celebrating the International Year of Family Farming (IYFF-2014).

As already mentioned in my message 80% of the membership of EAFF represents smallscale farmers. These are family farmers who derive their shelter, employment, food, energy and entertainment from agriculture.

To them agriculture is not just a business but a way to life. In this set up, the family and the farm are linked, co-evolve and combine economic, environmental, reproductive, social and cultural functions. In our countries over 70% of the food we eat is from smallscale farmers. Globally over 40% of rural households depend on agriculture and over 1.5 billion of them work on 404 m plots measuring less than 5 hectares each. Available data indicates that in developing countries 500 million small farmers provide food to 2 billion people 1/3 of humanity.

Unfortunately and especially for the Sub Saharan Africa it is this category of society that is poor, hungry and malnourished. For us to fight poverty, hunger and malnutrition this is where we need to focus most of our investments.

Your excellency, we would not have achieved so much without the support of our membership the board, council, national and regional governments, our development partners and institutions, the private sector and NGOs. I want to thank them most sincerely for their generous contribution to our success.

In conclusion I would like to acknowledge and thank all those who made this General assembly possible through contributions and different forms of support that we requested. I also thank the resource person present today to ensure that the three days of the assembly will be a success. I would also like to recognize dedication and hardwork devoted to organization of this assembly by the chief executive of EAFF and the entire secretariate, and the host organizing committee in CAPAD. To all of you welcome and God bless.

P.M Kiriro

President EAFF

Sign.....Date 5th August 2013