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**Joint communiqué by Ministers of Agriculture of Kenya,
Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda
on the
High level Policy Forum on
Sustainable Intensification of Maize- Legume Cropping Systems for
Food Security in Eastern and Southern Africa (SIMLESA)**

28th October, 2015

Entebbe, Uganda

Joint communiqué by Ministers of Agriculture of Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda of the high level Policy Forum on Sustainable Intensification of Maize- Legume Cropping Systems for Food Security in Eastern and Southern Africa (SIMLESA)

We, the representatives of the Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries, Kenya; Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, Mozambique; Minister of Agriculture and Animal Resources, Rwanda, Minister of Agriculture, Food Security and Cooperatives, Tanzania; and the Minister of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries, Uganda.

Gathered in Entebbe, Uganda, on this 28th day of October 2015;

Aware that despite low levels of productivity in agriculture, coupled with fragmented markets, smallholder farming is a key driver of agriculture and a determinant of livelihoods in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Conscious that the predicted doubling of our population by 2050 with consequent declines in arable land per capita, aggravated by the effects of climate change requires us to find innovative ways to ensure food and nutrition security for our population.

Cognizant of the need to use our land resource in ways that will ensure its health and sustainable access to future generations

Noting that integrated crop and livestock systems play complementary roles in providing food, manure and incomes to farmers and that the use of sustainable intensification practices including combinations of crop diversification practices, intercropping, rotations and minimum tillage promoted through SIMLESA show promise in boosting productivity and reversing current declines in soil fertility while enhancing the resilience of our farming systems to climate change and related risks.

Informed by research evidence that application of resource conservation practices, crop diversification and livestock integration can increase productivity; that farmers belonging to groups are more likely to diversify cropping patterns and more likely to build their resilience by trying out new farming practices, use improved varieties and adopt soil and water conservation practices; that farmers who are close to markets have better access to farm inputs and can readily sell their farm produce and more likely to adopt maize and legume intercrops and rotations, improved varieties and management practices.

Informed by fresh evidence that intra Africa-trade is the lowest globally, amounting to only 10-20%, with intra Africa trade in agricultural goods and services accounting

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Mindful that the risk of spread of Maize Lethal Necrosis disease in the region is high: MLN was first reported in Kenya in 2011 and has now spread to DR Congo, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Tanzania, South Sudan and Uganda where it is causing devastation to maize, a key food security and livelihood crop in Eastern and Southern Africa.

Cognizant of the fact that social capital and public goods such as good roads and private assets remain critical preconditions for the adoption of sustainable intensification practices, and noting that innovation platforms account for more than 75% of information accessed by farmers in the process of enhancing adoption of technologies

Do therefore recommend the following policy actions to our Governments and call for concerted action from a range of multiple stakeholders in Eastern and Southern Africa including: development and science researchers, extension agencies and organisations, National Parliaments and Local Governments in the sub-region, non-governmental organisations involved in agricultural research for development and associated supporting ministries and sectors, regulatory agencies, farmers and farmer organisations, trade organisations, et cetera:

POLICY RECOMMENDATION SUITE 1: PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE INTENSIFICATION THROUGH ENHANCED INPUT ACCESS

Adoption of sustainable intensification practices requires access to markets, knowledge and information, inclusive financing and affordable inputs

Governments should therefore:

Increase frequency and access to extension information and services - Governments and development partners working through agricultural extension service agencies should increase frontline extension workers to at least 33 per 10,000 farmers for an effective extension system and other home grown approaches e.g. mobile short message services. Enhanced frequency and amount of extension information available to farmers is proven to enhance adoption of sustainable intensification practices.

Promote inclusive financing - Governments in collaboration with the private sector should facilitate farm level access to investment capital through innovative rural financing mechanisms such as mobile money banking to reach many farmers with much needed micro-finance. In addition, trade financing guarantees and other appropriate supportive financing options for importers to stock agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, herbicides so as to stabilize prices during periods of high demand.

Enhance inclusivity in input access by providing market-smart input subsidies which are well targeted to poor farmers, using private sector distribution systems for limited periods of time and with clear exit strategies. Smart subsidies should be

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coupled with sound policies and regulations for supply risk management, timely input supply, training and technology transfer support to enhance participation of smallholders in agricultural commodity based value chains.

Improve the logistics of fertilizer distribution to enhance availability in farming areas by investing in ongoing efforts at regional economic blocs level to make port and customs operations more efficient, improve road and rail networks, foster functional retail distribution networks to minimize long distances that farmers travel to purchase inputs.

Streamline fertilizer tax structures to provide incentives for sustained private sector investment.

Facilitate quality assurance in the agricultural input sector through domestication of harmonized quality and quantity standard specifications for fertilizer, herbicide and seed across the region, streamlining investments in blending, bagging and labeling and strengthening regulatory institutional capacities for quality assurance including capacity to enforce controls on adulteration and marketing of non-standard products.

Simplify documentation and approval procedures for importation and marketing of fertilizer, herbicides and seed in the region.

Regulate the packaging of fertilizer, herbicides and seed to quantities matching the requirements of smallholder farmers.

Promote access to improved maize and legume seed through support to quality declared seed schemes (QDS) that integrate the informal seed into the formal sector through appropriate guidelines and capacity building of actors in quality seed production, and support to the COMESA, SADC and EAC regional seed release initiatives, and enhanced access to foundation seed for certified and quality declared seed multiplication.

Strengthen public private partnerships for fast-tracking scaling up and delivery of seeds to smallholder farmers.

Extension organizations and advisory service providers should therefore:

Train farmers in sustainable intensification practices validated under SIMLESA and other players to enhance soil health including using organic matter, application of mineral fertilizers, and planting legume crops like cowpea, soybean and pigeon pea, use of Rhizobia inoculum and fertilizer trees.

Foster technology-transfer support through technology transfer advisories and agro-dealers using well-tested home grown approaches, manuals, guidelines, demonstrations, and a range of other media.

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Train farmers on proper application, safe use and handling of fertilizers and herbicides to increase efficiency, and clear myths and misconceptions about fertilizers and herbicides. They should facilitate the setting up of technical service units and capacity building organizations to train farmers on use and application. Train farmers on business, entrepreneurship and marketing

Researchers should therefore:

Establish fertilizer recommendations supported by soil testing by crop and agro-ecological zones and increase efficiency at farm level by promoting production technologies and practices that enhance nutrient and water use efficiency, to increase returns to fertilizer use.

Address challenges related to conservation agriculture such as weeds and termite infestations.

Facilitate development of varieties that address micronutrient deficiencies and hidden hunger.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION SUITE 2: BUILDING ON SOCIAL CAPITAL FOR COLLECTIVE ACTION

Social capital among farmers enhances their capacity to adopt and harness the benefits of technology developments

Governments should therefore:

Strengthen existing and additional efforts to grow social capital by supporting the creation of innovation platforms (IPs) and other community based arrangements for demand articulation, technology transfer, adoption and networks for information exchange, market access and resource mobilization. Both national and local governments are duty bound to facilitate training, exchange visits, coordinate national level taskforces to decide mechanisms for IP-related policy, and by laws and integrate the IP model into the national approaches to agricultural extension. To achieve this, Governments therefore need to mainstream IP strengthening in the national budgets and plans.

Strengthen extension skills in IP facilitation through support to a structured programme of capacity building of existing extension workers, especially for suitable business-led scaling models and enhancing the agricultural education curriculum at all levels.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION SUITE 3: REMOVING BARRIERS TO CROSS BORDER TRADE

Governments should:

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Prioritize and implement road and trade infrastructure development. This includes refurbishment of roads and deployment of the electronic single window customs procedures. Innovative funding mechanisms are also required to support upgrades to the region's main infrastructure corridors and rural infrastructure that connect producers to the major corridors.

Facilitate removal of non-tariff barriers to trade by supporting the COMESA, EAC and SADC Tripartite Free Trade Area online non-tariff barriers reporting, monitoring and eliminating mechanism - <http://www.tradebarriers.org/>. This is supported by a time bound programme for elimination of non-tariff barriers, national focal points and national monitoring committees who meet regularly and report to a regional fora. In addition, national governments should implement regionally agreed standards for products as well as harmonized regulations and procedures.

Enhance access to market information by improving the outreach of mobile and internet connectivity in rural areas through investments in market information systems including ICT and mobile telephony options to raise awareness on prices, trading regulations and related reforms, supply and deficit zones, stock levels, as well as simplify procedures for permits and approval of business transactions.

Enhance value addition and diversification by fostering public-private sector partnerships that support value addition and technology incubation to develop products, test them for market feasibility and enterprise to trigger off viable, competitive agro-enterprise businesses.

Facilitate the modernization of maize and legume value chains with a focus on infrastructure for auxiliary services such as credit, forward sales, transportation, post-harvest handling and grading. Options for reducing the length of the value chains or to enable farmers become more fully integrated into wider markets should be explored.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION SUITE 4: CURBING THE SPREAD OF MLN

To prevent the spread of MLN causing viruses from endemic to non-endemic areas, the following policy responses are proposed:

Governments should:

Mandate and enforce synchronized maize planting and maize-free windows in severely affected areas in order to break the virus cycle and encourage intercropping with legumes.

Mobilise a dynamic extension system to create adequate awareness among the farming communities on appropriate MLN diagnosis and management measures.



Strengthen national phytosanitary capacities and establish a community of practice for effective surveillance and monitoring in the region by linking the National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs) in the sub-region to implement harmonized MLN diagnostic protocols using brief and simple survey forms that are standardized for the region.

Establish a dynamic, open-access MLN portal that provides latest updates on disease status in different countries, promising MLN tolerant varieties, MLN management recommendation domains.

Fast track the release of maize tolerant and resistant varieties.

Strengthen private and public sector seed testing laboratory capacity for MLN diagnosis

Promote maize-legume crop rotations in MLN affected areas for both prevention of virus spread and soil improvement

National Plant Protection Organizations (NPPOs) should:

Without MLN-free seed certification do not allow the movement of commercial seed between MLN-endemic to non-endemic countries to prevent further spread of MLN through contaminated commercial seed from the MLN-endemic to non-endemic areas in Sub Saharan Africa.

Establish MLN quarantine sites in non-endemic countries for free movement of germplasm for research.

Use accredited laboratories with harmonized testing protocols to issue certificates of testing for MLN.

Seed companies should:

Implement standard operating procedures (SOPs) to produce MLN-free seed along the seed development value chain. All public and private institutions involved in maize seed production, especially in MLN-endemic countries, must take rigorous measures to ensure that the seed produced is free from MLN-causing viruses, and only such seed is marketed/commercialized. Every step in the seed value chain should be planned and implemented through SOPs to minimize the risk of MLN pathogen transmission through seed. The responsibility for MLN-free seed production should rest with the seed companies.

Extension service providers should:

Provide well-informed, science-based, clear instructions to the farmers as to what actions have to be taken for diagnosis and management of MLN. In terms of good agronomy, farmers need to be trained on all aspects of MLN detection, plant rouging,

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residue management, tillage practices and the need to report suspected incidences to agricultural authorities.

Create awareness and encourage use of integrated MLN control practices including crop rotations with non-cereals especially legumes.

Encourage farmers to use pesticides to control insect vectors that transmit MLN causing viruses.

Farmers should be encouraged to:

Adopt and use the proven practices for diagnosis and integrated MLN management

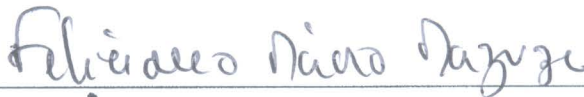
Share their indigenous knowledge and technologies related to MLN management to enhance generation of more lasting solutions to the MLN epidemic.

Researchers should:

Analyse and recommend economically viable options in terms of crop diversification, crop rotations and alternative agri-enterprises in MLN affected areas and countries to ascertain market potential and returns on investment to farmers.



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