

“Economic Partnership Agreements: working together for regional integration and food sovereignty”

**A side event in the context of the Sixty-sixth Session of the FAO Committee on Commodity Problems
Tuesday 24 April 2007 - 15:00 to 18:00
Red Room**

This side event is co-sponsored by the farmer organization networks of five ACP regions¹, the EuropAfrica campaign², the IPC³, FAO and IFAD. It will present and seek reactions to the autonomous assessments undertaken by the farmer organization networks as their contribution to the official midterm review of the EPA negotiations, whose major recommendations are summarized in the box below. It will explore the next steps that need to be taken over the coming weeks and months for the EPAs to meet their stated objective of promoting regional integration and development.

The event will also highlight an exemplary case of collaboration between multilateral institutions (IFAD and FAO) on the one hand, and civil society organizations on the other (farmer organization networks and the civil society organizations engaged in the EuropAfrica campaign). It will suggest ways in which such collaboration can be strengthened in the future, while respecting the different identities, roles and responsibilities of each partner.

The event will touch on various issues of relevance to the Sixty-sixth Session of the Committee on Commodity Problems, including the following: relations between global and regional multilateral trade negotiations; the role of FAO in defending food security and smallholder agriculture in the context of trade negotiations, technical instruments such as special products for development and supply management, the "Aid for Trade" approach. Its major conclusions will be reported to the final plenary session of the CCP on Wednesday 25 April.

The programme is divided into two panels: the first will take stock of where we are in the EPA negotiations and what major issues are outstanding. The second will seek to identify the way forward and how the various actors involved can pursue it together.

Programme

15:00 – 15:10

Introduction - Nora McKeon, EuropAfrica – brief presentation of the EPAs and of the background to the side event.

15:10 – 16:20

Panel I: Taking stock of the EPA Negotiations

Presentation by Mamadou Cissokho, Honorary President of ROPPA, on behalf of the five regional farmer organization networks of the major recommendations emerging from their studies and the strategies they are adopting in order to defend their viewpoints in the negotiation process (10 min).

¹ Network of Peasant and Agricultural Producers' Organizations of West Africa (ROPPA), East African East African Farmers' Federation (EAFF), Sub-regional Platform of Peasant Organizations of Central Africa (PROPAC), Southern African Confederation of Agricultural Unions (SACAU), Winward Island Farmers' Association (WINFA).

² A North-South campaign bringing together Italian NGOs and farmer organization members of the Italian Support Group for the Farmers' Movements in Africa coordinated by Terra Nuova and Crocevia, the Belgian NGO Collectif Stratégies Alimentaire, and ROPPA.

³ International Civil Society Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty

Reactions by speakers from FAO, an ACP government, a Regional Economic Organization and the European Commission - DG Trade -. 5 min. each.

General discussion

16:20 – 17:30

Panel II: Where to next?

Presentations (5 min each) by: the ACP regional farmer organization networks; IFAD; Patrizia Sentinelli, Vice-Minister for Cooperation, Italy; Ambassador Ferdinand Nyabenda, ACP Assistant Secretary General*; .Stefano Manservigi, Director-General, DG – Development, EC*, Antonio Onorati, EuropAfrica/IPC

General discussion

Conclusions – 17:30 – 18:00

Summary of major points emerging from the presentations and discussions

Concluding remarks by senior management of IFAD and FAO

*To be confirmed.

***Interpretation in English, French, Spanish and Italian will be available.
The side event will be followed by a cocktail in the Aventino Room***

**Co-funded by the European Union (EU) and
the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)**

Excerpt from the synthesis document of the Independent Contribution of the ACP Regional Networks of Farmers' Organizations to the Midterm Review of the EPAs

"In conclusion, our farmers' organizations put forward four priorities:

- 1. Give priority to regional integration** : the development of regional markets offers more promising perspectives for the fight against poverty and for sustainable economic development than does the hypothetical growth of international markets;
- 2. Define a trade regime based on asymmetry and equity** : this is the only way to reduce the gap between the EU and the ACP and to infuse real content into the principle of special and differential treatment, recognized both in the context of the WTO and in the Cotonou Agreement. This asymmetry must lead to excluding sensitive agricultural products, that is those products imported from the EU which compete with local products in the ACP regions.
- 3. Improve participation by farmers' organizations and other actors in the preparation and negotiation of the EPAs** : this participation, beyond the principles of democracy included in the Cotonou Agreement, constitutes a guarantee of the relevance of the choices made in the negotiations and a precondition to their effective implementation.
- 4. Take the time and avail the means necessary for thorough preparation** : it is necessary to implement regional integration and sectoral policies, to carry out deeper assessments of the impacts of different trade regimes, to strengthen regional capacities (decision-makers and civil society actors) to define and defend a negotiating position in conformity with the challenges and the interests of each ACP region."