

# We need to rethink our agriculture policies and curriculum

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**TURN FROM PAGE 39**

masquerading as experts thereby incurring huge losses. In addition, there is a need for research to be demand-driven and pegged to a policy agenda, thereby meeting development goals.

Lack of extension service has been worsened by reduced budgetary allocation to the sector. Over a decade since the Maputo Declaration on Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Program (CAADP) that recommends at least up to 10 per cent of the national budget be allocated to agriculture, this is yet to be realised in the region. The regional governments needs to pass laws ensuring compliance to CAADP recommendation, it is the only sure way to advance the sector.

Post-harvest losses are a major challenge, and have been for a very long time. When there is glut in production, most of the produce goes to waste even before it gets to the market. Lack of adequate infrastructure mainly roads network and storage facilities has been the main cause of post-harvest losses. Due to lack of market information and lack of organisational structure for market access, most of the farmers will not always access the market at the right time.

Global food production stands at four billion tonnes annually. It is estimated that 50 per cent of this never reach con-

sumers. (Source- Global Food Waste Not-Want Not Report).

The US is working to reduce its Food waste by 50 per cent by partnering with food sellers and retailers and NGOs to half food waste by 2030. France and Italy have passed laws banning dumping of food. We not only don't have a plan in place to reduce food waste, but do not even know how much wastes occur. There is a need to do a full study on food wastes and pass laws to reduce food wastes. It is unethical to throw away food while millions of people go without food.

Policies and regulations play a key role in the growth of the sector; more so considering the global nature of the trade between the region and the rest of the world. The region has been able to comply with International regulations; a good example is Kenya which has been a key player in the Horticultural sector. Kenya has been able to successfully comply with Global GAP standards. In line with the International regulations, a number of Policies have been inclined to export trade. For example, the Agricultural Produce (Export) Act CAP 319 and Food, Drugs and Chemical Substances Act CAP 254 need to be reviewed so as to include produce for domestic market.

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**Stephen Muchiri, EAFF CEO**

**Q: What is the Eastern African Farmers' Federation and what has it managed to achieve since its establishment?**

The Eastern Africa Farmers' Federation (EAFF) is a regional farmers' organization whose membership consists of national farmer federations and national co-operative organizations in (10) countries in Eastern Africa - Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. Since its establishment in 2001, EAFF's membership has grown from seven member organizations to twenty three (23) in 2015. EAFF has developed more than thirty key strategic partnerships over the past ten years. Over the same period, EAFF has signed more than ten (10) Memoranda of Understanding with strategic partners, and has a seat in over fifteen (15) Committees. EAFF is an active member of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), the International Land Coalition and the Pan African Farmers Organization (as a founding member), among others.

**Q: What is the role of farmer organizations in agricultural development and achieving food security in East Africa?**

EAFF's core belief is that farmer organizations have a critical role to play in agricultural development, by directly or indirectly linking farmers to various relevant services. EAFF's strategic plan defines four core strategic areas through which farmer organizations can and should deliver services to farmers. The first strategic area is by strengthening farmers as key actors in value chains. This means that farmers, through their organizations, should access more profitable markets for their produce, affordable financing and appropriate technologies. In 2015, EAFF was able to link maize and rice co-operatives in East Africa to various grain buyers resulting in sales worth over USD 2 Million. This year, EAFF in collaboration with the Kenya Livestock Producers' Association (KLPA) and the Dairy Goats Association of Kenya (DGAK) exported 45 breeding Alpine from Kenya to Djibouti.

EAFF's second strategic area is policy and advocacy. EAFF's intention is for farmer organizations to effectively engage in policy processes related to agriculture and food security. At the national level, EAFF supported the National Union for Coffee Agribusinesses and Farm Enterprises (NUCAFE) to advance coffee farmers' interests in the formulation of the National Coffee Policy in Uganda. At the regional level, EAFF has an excellent relationship with the East African Community (EAC) and the East African Legislative Assembly (EALA). EAFF initiated and spearheaded the debate and passing of the EAC Co-operative Societies Act, 2015. Once assented to, by the EAC Heads of State, this law would facilitate co-operatives to exploit the EAC regional integration process.

Lastly, one of EAFF's recent flagship initiatives is the EAFF e-Granary. The e-Granary is a mobile platform that virtually aggregates farmers' produce with the aim of linking farmers to profitable markets. The platform is still in the pilot phase in Kenya, with the intention of rolling it out to Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda in the course of 2016. EAFF has partnered with an IT company called MODE, through which the e-Granary will provide micro-credit to farmers.

For more information about EAFF, please visit our website [www.eaffu.org](http://www.eaffu.org).



Mechanisation can improve efficiency in agriculture and tackle wastage in farms even before processing. Picture: File

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