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BRUSSELS POLICY BRIEFING – ADDRESSING WASTE ALONG THE FOOD CHAIN REDUCING FOOD WASTE IN TIME OF CRISIS

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Introduction

Eastern Africa Farmers Federation is a regional network of national and apex farmer associations, co-operatives, women farmers and commodity associations. The membership comprises 80% small scale farmers and 20% medium scale farmers – we are in 10 countries (the EAC and the horn of Africa) and have 20 members comprising over 20 million farmers (this is only about 20% of the entire farming population). These farmers cut across the farming sector from crops, livestock, fisheries, apiary, agroforestry. A majority are involved in primary production only and sell their produce at the farm gate – the general characteristic of farmers in subsahara Africa is that they are fragmented, have low organizational and general capacities and are food net buyers.

Food waste loss

Postharvest losses and food waste are a major concern in Africa and is hence a major threat to food and nutrition situation of a majority of farmers

Upto 30% grain and 50% of fruits and vegetables are lost at postharvest stage due to poor logistical challenges. While food wastage is becoming a major challenge especially in urban areas where heaps and heaps of food is dumped in major city dump sites further aggravating the global percentage of food wasted along the value chains.

In our region increased causes of post harvest are known i.e.

- Losses from insects and pests damage
- Losses due to weather related damage
- Losses due to poor storage
- Losses due to pre-post harvest diseases e.g. aflatoxin in Maize (resulted into 90% loss of grain in easter province of Kenya in 2010)
- Losses during transportation due to poor stacking; sacks etc
- Losses at the market – mixes of fruits and vegetables due to ethylene gas, damage from the sun during display; over ripe etc
- Losses from food consumption – as waste

The percentage provided is a very conservative one because the mentioned causes of postharvest loss are increasing by the day thus substantially reducing in absolute terms the production per hectare (i.e. current maize production is 2tons per Ha; with 30% loss in postharvest gives 1.4tons per ha net).

Therefore when we look at the current food insecurity condition in COMESA region where our annual food bill is 20b usd; with 90% of the imported food being staples it means that as a major intervention we need to substantially invest in post harvest processes.