



United Nations  
Economic Commission for Africa

# **Validation meeting on the study to assess the feasibility of establishing and managing a common agro-industrial park between Zambia and Zimbabwe**







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First printing: November 2021

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Designed and printed in Addis Ababa by the ECA Printing and Publishing Unit. ISO 14001:2015 certified.  
Printed on chlorine free paper

Cover photo: Shutterstock

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## I. Introduction

Building on a long history of collaboration, the Governments of Zambia and Zimbabwe have launched a joint industrialization programme to promote structural and economic transformation in the two countries. The two member States have identified the development of a common agro-industrial park as a starting point for industrial cooperation. A recently-signed memorandum of understanding on a joint industrialization programme will support the agro-industrial park initiative. The programme is anchored in the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) Industrialization Strategy 2017–2026 and its associated action plan, which identify a number of priority areas for value chain development, including agroprocessing, energy, textiles and garments, leather and leather products, mineral beneficiation, pharmaceuticals, chemicals and agro-chemicals, light engineering and the blue economy.

The planned agro-industrial park will utilize agricultural resources in both countries to create employment, attract investment and promote cross-border economic growth. The park will facil-

itate the development of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises, exploiting opportunities along commodity value chains. It is envisaged that the agro-industrial park will boost the share of GDP generated in both countries by agriculture, strengthen food security and improve people's livelihoods by creating sustainable jobs and promoting the development of micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises.

The COMESA secretariat, with the support of the Subregional Office for Southern Africa (SRO-SA) of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), retained a consultant to undertake a study to assess the feasibility of establishing and managing a common agro-industrial park between Zambia and Zimbabwe within the context of subregional efforts to advance industrialization. The draft feasibility study report was reviewed and validated at a virtual regional meeting jointly organized by COMESA and SRO-SA on 31 May 2021. The present report contains a summary of the discussions and outcomes of that validation meeting.

## II. Opening of the meeting

**What is this acronym? Why is it necessary after Mr Mhlanga's name?**

The meeting opened with remarks by: the Acting Director of SRO-SA, Sizo Mhlanga (MHDSRIP); the Chair of the twenty-sixth session of the Intergovernmental Committee of Senior Officials and Experts for Southern Africa, Rethabile Maluke; the Director, Agriculture and Industry at the COMESA secretariat, Providence Mavubi; the Acting Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry of Zambia, Paul Lupunga; and the Deputy Director, Ministry of Industry and Commerce of Zimbabwe, Spiwe Nyamatore.

Mr. Mhlanga welcomed all delegates and participants to the meeting on behalf of ECA. He highlighted the importance of the agricultural sector

to socioeconomic development, the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals and other developmental aspirations in Southern Africa, noting that the sector contributed an estimated 40 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in COMESA countries and supported the livelihoods of over 70 per cent of the subregion's citizens. Agriculture presented member States with opportunities to address poverty, hunger, unemployment and inequality and also to pursue agricultural-led industrialization through the deepening of commodity value chains and linkages with other economic sectors. He stressed that the development of agroprocessing industries had even greater potential for enhancing inclusive growth, sustaina-

ble economic transformation and job creation. He highlighted the importance of value addition and value chain development in transforming regional economies and in creating sustainable jobs, and emphasized that the production of value added products was particularly important within the context of the opportunities offered by the establishment of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The secretariats of both COMESA and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) should continue to encourage member States to support investment in agro-processing and promote the local manufacture of agroprocessing machinery and equipment.

The industrialization agenda in Southern Africa was anchored on strengthened integration among member States and policy harmonization, and the joint industrialization cooperation programme between Zambia and Zimbabwe would further accelerate structural and economic transformation and provide business and growth opportunities for micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises along a range of commodity value chains. The meeting would provide an opportunity to examine the findings and recommendations of the feasibility study report and refocus policies and implementation strategies. In closing, he thanked the COMESA secretariat for its support and reiterated the ongoing commitment of ECA to supporting the agro-industrial park initiative.

In her remarks, Ms. Maluke commended ECA for its ongoing support for regional development initiatives and for working closely with both COMESA

a common cross-border agro-industrial park in order to leverage the rich and diverse agricultural base of the two countries. She underlined that the disruption of supply chains due to the COVID-19 pandemic had highlighted the need for accelerated regional trade and value chain development, stressed the critical role that could be played by the private sector in building back better and emphasized that micro-, small and medium-sized enterprises were ideally placed to exploit opportunities along subregional value chains. She urged private-sector stakeholders to take advantage of the industrial cooperation agreement between the two countries and to build linkages through value addition. She also emphasized the need to factor in green industrialization and climate change issues in the activities of the agro-industrial park, noting the energy-intensive nature of industrialization and the need to embrace green energy, identify uses for agro-industrial waste and develop recycling programmes. She trusted that the agro-industrial park would successfully leverage innovative technologies to increase efficiency and produce competitive products for African markets. She expressed confidence that the meeting outcomes would not only help Zambia and Zimbabwe establish a viable agro-industrial park, but would also provide valuable input for other member States and stakeholders wishing to launch similar initiatives.

Ms. Mavubi reminded the meeting that the COMESA secretariat and member States were strengthening their efforts to promote industrial development, including through

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