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**SUMMARY OF THE ANSWERS TO THE AEFJN QUESTIONNAIRE ON ECONOMIC
PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS (EPAS)**

The Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network sent a questionnaire to its members in Africa, on the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and their possible impact on the small farmers and the population in the different African countries.

27 individuals and 9 groups numbering 56 people, in total 83 people from 10 African countries participated in and answered our Questionnaire. The countries belong to the 4 African regions: Eastern Africa, Southern Africa, Western Africa and Central Africa. The range of their professions was very large: from agricultural and commercial officers and agents to economists, business consultants, students, program coordinators, carers of the disable and poor, journalists, students and teachers from universities and professional schools, priests, missionaries, accountants, sales and marketing agents, nurses, development and advocacy agents.

The responses obtained were the following:

Small farmers are involved in extensive and intensive agriculture and livestock. Most small farmers sell their goods on local and provincial markets. Those gathered in cooperatives manage to reach the provincial and national and even the regional and international markets. Most of the small farmers' products reach the international market only through intermediaries. Retailers from towns come to local markets to buy the merchandise. In most countries small scale farmers sell their products locally as they have no structured market to sell them outside the country.

The local food production (maize, cassava, millet, peanuts) is sometimes exported to the neighbouring countries in the region. Main cereals (wheat, maize, rice) reach the national and international market. Only a few cooperatives and mostly big producers are able to export to the EU and to regional markets.

Half of the respondents mention that most local farmers do not have access to processing, sales and distribution facilities. Those who have access to them do so through cooperatives. Very few small farmers have access to processing facilities. 70% of the respondents say that small producers cannot access the EU market. The expressions used are: "very difficult" "nearly impossible", "impossible", "not practical", "no chance to access the EU market".

30% of the respondents affirm that small producers have access to the EU market, through local cooperatives, marketing boards, or through other intermediaries. 44% of respondents say that farmers and producers that export to EU do it through local cooperatives and marketing boards. 56% of the respondents mention that some farmers and producers are able to export to the EU through private foreign companies with local participation.

The main agricultural exports mentioned are cocoa, cotton, tobacco, coffee, sugar and tea. While tea is produced in big plantations, the others: cocoa, cotton, tobacco and coffee are also produced by small farmers that sell them on the local or national market, to the Boards or companies exporting them, as well as in auctions (such as flowers in Zambia and tobacco in Malawi) . Many small farmers sell their coffee crop to the Coffee Board that exports it mainly to the EU. Small farmers sell the Cotton to the national company that exports it to the EU.

Only 18.5% of respondents from Cameroon, Ghana, Uganda and Zambia believe that EPAs will increase access to EU markets for small scale producers. All insist on the fact that farmers must be protected and have access to funding and to transport to benefit from EPAs. The vast majority (78%) believes that EPAs will not increase access to EU markets for small scale producers.

The main barriers for African exports are not fiscal, but qualitative. Therefore, African competitiveness in the European market is not likely to increase. Many mention that the problem is not market access but the lack of infrastructure in Africa, mainly in rural areas. Other reasons given are the need to protect small producers, to help them to get organized and produce more, before EPAs come into effect. Many mention that the EPA deadline makes it impossible for small producers to have time to get organized to face liberalisation.

Only 23 % answered that they believed EPAs could increase productivity and added value exports. A good number are convinced that EPAs serve the interest of the EU even if it is presented as opening up the European markets to African countries.

A recurring fear is that EPAs will reinforce the position of some countries as exporters of low-value, unprocessed commodities undermining some governments' strategy to add value to agricultural goods to develop a manufacturing sector. A great number of respondents affirm that real competition is not possible between EU and Africa because the playing ground is not level and the conditions of production are so different.

The main reason mentioned as unfair competition is the EU subsidies to EU agricultural products. EU competition and the opening of ACP markets to products from countries with advanced technology will be harmful to some nascent industries, such as leather and shoe manufacturing, plastic, paper, that are at their initial stages, and not strong enough to compete fairly. In general African countries produce poor quality products compared to EU products.

Fears and worries are also generated by goods imported from the EU. The import of big quantities of cheap subsidized food and agricultural products frustrates the farmers who cannot compete with imports neither in quality nor in price. The fall of prices leads to the decrease of local production. Some farmers go bankrupt as they cannot sell their products, or have to sell them at a loss. The buying power of the rural households diminishes, jobs are lost and the local economy collapses and this is followed by extreme poverty. This has serious consequences for the welfare of farmers and for food security. As a result, farmers enter into the spiral of poverty and cannot pay school fees for their children, nor pay for their medical care.

Agricultural imports adversely affect the productivity of farmers and take away the limited market available for small farmers. Three kinds of products are mentioned by nearly all respondents where the imports destroy local production: poultry, rice, cheap textiles and clothing.

When the imported product is of higher quality, usually it is more expensive than the local one. In the case of rice, only the upper social class is able to buy imported rice of good quality. Most people buy broken and old imported rice, of lower quality. However, local rice quality is in storage but cannot be sold, due to its higher cost of production.

Also the imports of technology serve the interest of the developed countries who supply it more than those of the Africans. Most often the technology sent to Africa is second hand or not good quality "*and good for nothing*".

According to our respondents, some of the consequences linked to the implementation of EPAs are: low productivity (producers will get discouraged), lower income for the majority, high unemployment levels, migration from rural to urban areas, increase of poverty, prostitution, drug addiction and criminality, decrease of education. This will possibly create social and political problems and unrest.

Many respondents compare the impact of EPAs to the negative effects that the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) had on most African countries, economically and socially, at the end of the 80's and 90's. They mention the harm and destruction that the liberalisation imposed by SAP did to small farmers and small industries.

Another source of concern is the influx of GMOs. According to our respondents, GMOs seeds are used in Burkina, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, DR Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Uganda and Ghana. Though some respondents from Ghana and Madagascar did not know which GMO crops were planted, they were certain that GMOs crops are sown in their countries. In many countries Farmers sow and plant GM crops believing they will increase their income. As there is no strong legislation against GMOs in most African countries, these enter the market as food, oil, etc.

In Ghana the new legislation (Biosafety Act) permits GMOs for planting, in field trials. As the legislation is silent on the regulation of GMOs imported for direct use as food (aid), feed and processing, GM soya and maize are almost certainly being used for consumption. Only Zambia with its strong legislation and a ban on the growing or importing of GMOs, is free of GMOs.